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Library of the University of Michigan
The Coyle Collection.

Miss Jean L. Coyle
of Detroit
in memory of her brother
Col. William Henry Coyle
1894.

Library of the University of Michigan
The Coyl Collection.
Miss Jean L. Coyl
of Detroit
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1894.

E. FREER

THE WORKS OF

LAURENCE STERNE

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 723

Laurence Sterne. After a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds

THE WORKS OF

LAURENCE STERNE

VOLUME ELEVEN

THE LIFE

OF

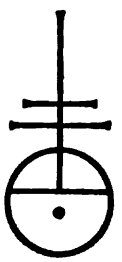
LAURENCE STERNE

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD

VOLUME I

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILBUR L. CROSS



THE JENSON SOCIETY

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LAURENCE STERNE (AFTER A PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

STERNE was among the first of our men of letters to be exploited by the press.

The public, naturally enough we should think nowadays, was very curious to know what manner of man was that who had written a book quite unlike any other they had ever read—how he lived, how he looked, and what he said; and information was forthcoming from the hacks of literature who very likely had never seen him. There was, for example,—to mention again what has been described and printed in another place—that first strange notice* from the pen of Dr. John Hill, a notorious London quack-doctor, who must have interviewed Sterne's friends in town for anecdotes half-fact and half-fiction. And after his death Sterne became the theme of more imaginary biography in a larger style. A wit of some ability, who signed himself "Tria Juncta in Uno,

* *Letters and Miscellanies*, Vol. I.

M.N.A., or Master of No Arts," launched two Shandean volumes under the title of *The Koran*, wherein Sterne is made to talk much of himself in the way of an autobiography. The author of *Tristram Shandy*, according to the fiction, tells the reader all about his relations with his uncle Jaques, and whence were derived my uncle Toby, Le Fevre, and other characters in the gallery of eccentrics. And finally he defends his jests and outspoken style and sets forth his literary plans, now that author and public have become tired of Shandeism. There was to come a "primmer," a little book for the instruction of the nobility and gentry in right conduct; and then a rival to Raleigh's *History of the World*—"an historical account and description of all the several great epochas of the world, from the *creation* to the *conflagration.*" As a specimen of what might be done in the final chapters of such a book, Yorick is made to describe the Last Day when the firmament shall be melted down. *The Koran* has been several times printed among the works of Sterne. So late as 1858, it was translated into French by Alfred Hédouin, who had no doubt that it

was genuine Sterne. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* congratulated the translator on the discovery of this interesting autobiography. The author of *The Koran*, it is now clear, was one Richard Griffith. He betted with a friend that he could write a book that "would pass current on the world as a writing of Mr. Sterne," and he won (so he said) the bet.*

At the request of Sterne's widow and daughter, John Wilkes, the politician, undertook the authorized life of the great humorist. According to the plan that seems to have been agreed upon, John Hall-Stevenson was to collaborate with him; and Lydia Sterne was to place in their hands her father's correspondence and adorn the work with original drawings. Needless to say, the *Life and Correspondence of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne* — as the work would doubtless have been called — never materialized. In the years that followed, Wilkes was overwhelmed with public affairs, when out of prison; and Hall-Stevenson, too indolent for sustained literary effort, stopped

* Consult Griffith's Shandean essays entitled *Something New* (1772).

work, after piecing together a few biographical scraps for a preface to his *Continuation of Yorick's Sentimental Journey.* Lydia Sterne—now Mrs. Medalle—alone remained faithful to the undertaking. In 1775, she published her father's correspondence and the brief memoir of himself that he set down out of love for "my Lydia." The title ran: *Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne, to His Most Intimate Friends, with a Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais. To Which are Prefix'd, Memoirs of His Life and Family. Written by Himself.*

It would be difficult to find in the range of literary biography a more shiftless piece of work. How different it is, for example, from that done by Mrs. Barbauld for Richardson! Mrs. Medalle had at hand the most intimate materials. The scant memoir of Sterne's early life down to the publication of *Tristram Shandy* might have been supplemented easily by information from Mrs. Sterne, Hall-Stevenson, and numerous friends at York and in London. The letters covering the period of Sterne's fame might have been woven into a continuous narrative, but no care was taken in the arrangement of them

and they tell no story. To increase the chaos, the names of Sterne's friends therein mentioned were at best indicated by an initial or two, and they were usually replaced by stars or dashes. Except for a slight continuation of the memoir and a few notes to the letters added to the collected edition of Sterne's works in 1780, not much more was to be known about the great humorist until after the middle of the nineteenth century.

I have not forgotten, of course, the "prefatory memoir" to Sterne's works that Sir Walter Scott wrote for Ballantyne in 1828. It is a striking sketch on the paradox that Sterne is "one of the greatest plagiarists, and one of the most original geniuses, whom England has produced." The sketch is brilliant in color, no doubt just because Scott had few details to build upon. It may aid our insight into the personality of Sterne, but it offers very little new knowledge. To be sure, Scott stretched out his narrative with a most interesting account of La Fleur, the gay valet of Sterne in the sentimental travels through France and Italy. La Fleur, so it is said, married a girl at

Montreuil much resembling Sterne's Maria, and afterwards took a public house at Calais. The dead donkey, the heart-broken Maria, the grisette at the glove-shop, the *fille de chambre*, "so pretty and petite," are all declared to be no invention of Yorick's. Doubtless this is so, but the details that Scott gave cannot be true. Scott found them in a miscellany of anecdotes called *An Olio* (1814), by William Davis, the bibliographer. Davis, we are asked to believe, met La Fleur at Calais and received direct from him the story of the valet and his master. The bibliographer must have been imposed upon by a smart lackey who knew how to play himself off on credulous Englishmen.

As years went by, the figure of Sterne receded more and more into the past and the unknown. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there remained little more of Sterne than the tradition of a very unclerical parson who had written a book or two that no one should read. "In my youth," wrote the elder D'Israeli in 1840, "the world doted on Sterne. * * * Forty years ago, young men, in their most face-

tious humours, never failed to find the archetype of society in the Shandy family." But now, of the three great humorists once thought sure of lasting fame, only "Cervantes," D'Israeli went on to say, "is immortal—Rabelais and Sterne have passed away to the curious." A few years more and Bulwer-Lytton could steal the striking incidents of *Tristram Shandy*, clothe them with new circumstance, and remain undiscovered. Then followed Thackeray with his portrait of a "mountebank" and "scamp" that poured forth "cheap dribble" over donkeys and old chaises. And the portrait was accepted as really true. Lytton and Thackeray mark the time when the great public had forgotten their Sterne. Read he was, but mostly by men of letters.

In the meantime some attempt had been made to reconstruct Sterne as he really was, from authentic documents. The distinction of being the first in the field belongs to Charles Athanase Walckenaer, a French scholar and scientist of wide contemporary repute and still remembered. The account of Sterne that Walckenaer contributed to the *Biographie Universelle* in 1825 is indeed

a slight affair when compared with the fullness of Mr. Fitzgerald. No new knowledge was given beyond an anecdote or two; but Walckenaer pointed out the right way for his successors to pursue. Copious material for a life of Sterne, he saw clearly, lay embedded in the correspondence. Put Sterne's letters into chronological order, restore the proper names that Mrs. Medalle left blank or indicated merely by writing stars; and then you have a biography of Sterne. Lamenting that he could not perform this service for Sterne, Walckenaer wrought out of such knowledge as he had a narrative by far the most substantial that had yet appeared.

During the next quarter-century, some fresh facts about Sterne were discovered and presented to the public. Isaac D'Israeli, as has been related elsewhere, saw the letters of Sterne to Miss Fourmantelle, and five of them he printed in an essay on Sterne.* Then came an article in *The London Quarterly Review* for April, 1854, giving a summary of all that was then known about Sterne. The article in question was from the pen of the editor at that time, the Rev.

* *Literary Miscellanies* (1840).

Whitwell Elwin. Among Elwin's many excellent contributions to the *Quarterly*, this must be recorded as perhaps the very best. In the manner of Walckenaer, but on a larger scale, the entire career of Sterne and all of his books were reviewed with judicious comment by the way. Here for the first time, Sterne's contemporaries — Gray, Johnson, Walpole, and Goldsmith — were cited and quoted for their opinion of Sterne, the man and author, and a handbook was consulted for following Sterne in London. Anent the charge of plagiarism that Scott insisted upon, it was remarked: "In everything which has made his fame—in his characters, his style, his humour, his pathos—there is no more original writer in the world." Scott took Dr. Ferriar's famous essay on Sterne's plagiarism without question. Elwin subjected it to careful examination.

Such are the more important sketches of Sterne that furnish the historical background to *The Life of Laurence Sterne* that Mr. Percy Fitzgerald published in 1864. Compared with what was then known of Richardson, Fielding, or Smollett, precise knowl-

edge of Sterne was still scant. He seemed to defy scrutiny. Walckenaer called attention to the fact that neither Sterne nor his friends and biographers had ever mentioned in print the maiden name of Mrs. Sterne. Who was this Miss L——? he inquired, and gave up the search. Elwin thought that the obscurity enveloping Sterne's twenty years at Sutton could never be penetrated. Referring to that period, he said: "Not a single fragment of Sterne's correspondence appears to have been kept by any one of his connexions." These are but indications of the dense ignorance concerning Sterne. Beginning his work with some preliminary studies, Mr. Fitzgerald received glad assistance from many hands. "Every one," he said in the preface to the first edition, "was eager to assist—as though anxious to have part in what might help to clear the name of their great countryman. No one seemed to spare himself in the labour of search, inquiry, or transcription." And when he came to state the result, he could justly say: "As regards materials, the present Life is, I may say, wholly new—new, in some twenty letters never before published—

new, in many letters which, though printed, have been scattered over the wild prairies of contemporary newspapers and magazines without indexes—new, in extracts from registers and minute-books—new, in numberless traits and facts buried in obscure memoirs of his day. Above all, unexpected light has been thrown upon Sterne's character, and many little incidents in his life, by a diligent study of his own writings." For the "harsh portrait" from the pen of Thackeray was now substituted one in which the lights and shades were mingled more like human nature as we all know it. Mr. Fitzgerald unfortunately never quite forgot Thackeray; he seemed to think that it was necessary to contest all that the great novelist had said about Sterne—to present, as it were, a counter portrait, differing in all respects. In consequence of this strongly reactionary attitude, he slipped easily over difficult passages in Sterne's life, excusing weaknesses and vices and insisting upon the virtues.

The view of Sterne presented by Mr. Fitzgerald was generally accepted down to near the end of the century. Bagehot,

Gosse, Traill, Scherer, and a score of other writers but repeated him in the main. Each in turn played the part of special pleader. Had the process of overlooking the vices for the virtues gone on another step, Sterne would have been enrolled among the saints. But Mr. Fitzgerald was to correct the new tradition that he himself had founded. Even before publishing the first edition of his *Life of Sterne*, he had read in one of Thackeray's *Roundabouts** concerning a strange diary that Sterne kept for Eliza after the manner of Swift's *Journal to Stella*. A "gentleman of Bath" had placed the precious document in Thackeray's hands at the time he was preparing lectures on the humourists of the eighteenth century. Thackeray still remembered the incident and wrote about it, but he could not recall the name of the "gentleman of Bath." Some fifteen years later Thomas Washbourne Gibbs—for that was his name—gave an account of the journal and other Sterne manuscripts in his possession to a literary society at Bath. Subsequently all these manuscripts were seen by

* Consult the Introduction to the *Journal to Eliza*.

Mr. Fitzgerald, who made them the basis of an article on Mrs. Draper for the *Cornhill Magazine.** By this time it had become clear to Mr. Fitzgerald that his portrait of Sterne needed darker shading. And so he rewrote the book of twenty years before, shearing away questionable pages and adding much that was new.

It is this new *Life of Laurence Sterne* that is here reprinted from the London edition of 1896. Briefer and better in many ways than the earlier work, it is nevertheless not without shortcomings. The fresh manuscript material that led to revision was not used for all that it is worth. It modified the biographer's attitude towards Sterne, but it was not always brought to bear upon obscure passages in Sterne's life for clearing up undoubted mistakes of fact. Mr. Fitzgerald was also sometimes satisfied, it would seem, to accept accounts of Sterne manuscripts in place of direct and careful inspection. Again, he was unacquainted with the letters of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord descriptive of Sterne's ways in the North just before the

* June, 1887.

country parson came into fame. These Yorkshire anecdotes,* as I have called them in the reprint, tell us more about Sterne of the Sutton period than all else combined. Besides this, the artistic temperament of Mr. Fitzgerald is somewhat perplexing to writers of less vivid imagination. With him the desire to make his narrative interesting may be so strong that he becomes inaccurate in varying degrees. "It is curious," he says, for example, "that three such famous books as *Rasselas*, *Candide* and *Tristram Shandy* should have appeared almost in the same month." *Rasselas* and *Candide* did indeed appear in March, but *Tristram Shandy* was then only in the first stages of composition. It was not published until December, as the biographer of course well knew. Akin to this imaginative rendering of fact as something better than fact itself, is a tendency with Mr. Fitzgerald to fuse in memory different incidents and times. An instance in point is the description of Sterne's "last sermon"† — the sermon he preached before the Duke of York after

* *Letters and Miscellanies*, Vol. I.
† Vol. II., Ch. VIII.

"the great races" of 1766. It had been a gala week in the cathedral city. "The concourse of people of all sorts during the race," so ran the account sent up to London for the newspapers,* "exceeded by far that of your Cornelys's, which I was at last winter. The sums won and lost here must have been immense, for, by a moderate calculation, there is left behind for subscriptions, lodgings, and necessary expenses, upwards of 10,000*l.* Even the Playhouse (which is the most elegant I have seen out of London) took above 500*l.* in the week, and the night the Duke ordered they took 100*l.* and upwards. The Ladies, who vied in splendor with each other, I thought would never be tired with dancing, for some begun on Monday and continued till Saturday night." After the dancing came Sterne's sermon. "On Sunday," I quote again from the newspapers,* "his Royal Highness the Duke of York went to the Minster, where he was received at the West Door by the Residentiary and Choir, the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, who

* *St. James Chronicle* for August 26–28, 1766. The same article appeared in other newspapers.

ushered him up to the Archbishop's Throne, where he heard an excellent Discourse from the Rev. Mr. Sterne." A gorgeous scene surely, just as it stands, for what may indeed have been Sterne's last sermon; but through some confusion Mr. Fitzgerald enlivens the occasion by the presence of "the young King of Denmark," who "was making a progress through England" in company with the Duke of York. It was he and not the Duke, according to Mr. Fitzgerald, who sat on the Archbishop's throne in the Minster. "The young King of Denmark," as one may see on consulting the biographical dictionaries, was married to Caroline Matilda, sister to the Duke of York, in October, 1766, but the marriage was by proxy. His Majesty kept in Denmark. The royal progress through England that Mr. Fitzgerald had in mind took place in the summer of 1768, some months after the death of "the Rev. Mr. Sterne."

In reprinting the *Life of Laurence Sterne* with this edition of his works, the editor has interpreted liberally Mr. Fitzgerald's permission to "use my Sterne life in any way that suits you." No changes, of course, have been

made in the text except for the correction of errors that were clearly due to the printer, and they do not exceed a half-dozen. But such mistakes in fact as the author has made or seems to have made are recorded in footnotes, separated from the author's own footnotes by brackets. These corrections, however, do not extend to the quotations from letters and other Sterne documents, which are left precisely as Mr. Fitzgerald left them. To this plan, however, one exception has been made. The Latin letter from Sterne to John Hall-Stevenson, which was mutilated by the printers beyond recognition, has been collated with the text of the first edition. Finally, it has seemed best to explain some of the more obscure allusions, such as those to books and authors now no longer read by the general public.

W. L. C.

NOTE

The present work is founded on a previous life of Sterne by the same author. It is in great part rewritten and contains much fresh material.

Inscribed

TO THE

REV. WHITWELL ELWIN

RECTOR OF BOOTON, NORWICH.

PREFACE

MANY years ago I wrote an account of Sterne, the first attempt that had been made at supplying a life of the great humorist. The materials were scanty enough, but I was fortunate in securing a large number of unpublished letters and other important matter. I was still more fortunate in receiving the advice and assistance of my old and valued friend the late Mr John Forster. The Rev. Whitwell Elwin, his friend and mine, an acute and accomplished critic, and the author of what is the best account of Sterne, also helped me with a number of useful suggestions and profuse references, such as only one of his vast reading could supply.

Many years, as I have said, have elapsed since the appearance of this work, and, as was to be expected, a quantity of fresh materials, letters and other MSS. have come to light. I have now almost entirely rewritten

the book, which may be practically considered a new life. Letters of Sterne are scarce and costly, yet I have gathered here a great number of new and interesting documents hitherto unpublished. I would point particularly to the long and interesting letter in which Sterne vindicates himself from the charge of neglect of and cruelty to his mother; to the extracts from the strange journal kept for Eliza; to the 'characteristical' notes in the Halifax school book; and to many other curious records.

I have been obliged, however, to modify the too favourable opinion I entertained of Sterne's life and character, and am constrained to admit that Mr Thackeray's view —harsh as it may seem—had much to support it. Yorick's Journal which I have read through carefully, is fatally damaging; exhibiting a repulsive combination of Pharisaical utterances and lax principle. This would seem to show that Mr Sterne was something more than the mere 'philanderer' he described himself to be. Mr Elwin was long ago constrained to adopt the same view. Indeed, it may be always fairly presumed that licentious writing is almost cer-

tain to be followed by life and practice as licentious.

Many critics and writers of eminence—Mr Carlyle, M. Taine, Mr Elwin, Mr Traill—have tried to analyse Sterne's style and methods, contrasting him with Rabelais, Cervantes, Fielding and Dickens. The truth is, our author was so capricious and even fragmentary and disorderly in his system that comparison is impossible. The writers just named were really 'monumental' in their handling of their characters, and completed their labour before issuing it to the world. Sterne sent forth his work in fragments, and often wrote what was sheer nonsense to fill his volumes. He allowed his pen to lead him, instead of he himself directing his pen. The whole is so incomplete and disjointed that cosmopolitan readers have not the time or patience to piece the various scraps together. But, as I have shown in the text—and this, I am convinced, is the true view—he has given to the world a group of living *characters*, which have become known and familiar even to those who have not read a line of *Tristram*. These are My Uncle Toby, Mr

and Mrs Shandy, Yorick—his own portrait —and Dr Slop. There are choice passages, too, grotesque situations and expressions which have become part of the language. Mr Shandy, I venture to think, is the best of these creations, more piquant and attractive even than My Uncle Toby, because more original and more difficult to touch. It is in this way that Sterne has made his mark, and may be said to be better known than read.

A great deal has been written on the false and overstrained sentiment of his pathetic passages such as in the 'Story of Le Fever,' 'Maria of Moulines,' 'The Dead Ass,' and other incidents. No doubt these were somewhat artificially wrought, but it must be remembered they followed the tone of the time. His exquisite humour is beyond dispute, the Shandean sayings, allusions, topics, etc., have a permanent hold; and, as they recur to the recollection, produce a complacent smile, even though the subject be what is called 'broad.' No better type of his humour could be given than the one quoted by Mr Elwin,—'"I have left Trim my bowling-green," said My

Uncle Toby. My father smiled. "I have also left him a small pension." My father looked grave.' In this stroke there is not merely humour, but a deep knowledge of character.

I would refer those who would enter on a critical study of Sterne's writings to Mr Elwin's searching article in the *Quarterly Review* (Vol. XCIV.), to Taine's well-known criticisms, to Mr Traill's little account in the 'English Men of Letters' series, founded ostensibly on my *Life of Sterne*, and to M. Paul Stapfer's Essay, also founded on the same work. There is also an elaborate examination of the book in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by an eminent Frenchman.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

ATHENÆUM CLUB,
February 1896.

LIFE OF STERNE

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

LIFE OF STERNE

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

IN one of his more familiar passages, Sterne thus speaks of his family:—'This is the reason,' he says, 'that . . . for these four generations we count no more than one archbishop, a Welsh judge, some three or four aldermen, and a single mountebank.' The archbishop was a notable prelate—of the Welsh judge but little or nothing is known. But the term 'mountebank' was often applied to the humorist; indeed, he once chose to be painted in that character.

Archbishop Richard Sterne* was an ardent loyalist, and took the side of the King

* Born, 1596; master of Jesus College, Cambridge, 1633; Bishop of Carlisle, 1660; translated to York, 1664; died, 1683. [The exact date of the archbishop's birth is unknown. He was elected master of Jesus College on March 7, 1633–4.]

in the Civil Wars. He sent the college plate to His Majesty, for which he was seized by Cromwell and imprisoned. He endured much persecution, being hooted and stoned by the crowd, and actually shipped in a collier to be sold—it was so believed—as a slave to the Algerians. Escaping this fate, he attended Laud to the scaffold. When the good times returned he was, of course, rewarded for his constancy and trials. He, later, assisted in revising the Book of Common Prayer, and has been suggested as one of the many authors of *The Whole Duty of Man.* When he died, Burnet wrote of him with some bitterness that 'he was a sour, ill-tempered divine, and minded chiefly the enrichment of his family. He was suspected of popery.' Of the archbishop's thirteen children, the eldest, Richard, was established at Elvington in Yorkshire, and had married a Yorkshire heiress, Miss Jaques, daughter of Sir Roger Jaques. The Sternes, indeed, were well connected on all sides, being allied with the Rawdons and other high county families. From another son, John, was descended the Irish

branch, connected with the Hills of Kilmallock. Of the thirteen, the one we are most interested in is, of course, Roger, described by his son Laurence as 'a lieutenant in Handasyd's Regiment,' or the 22d. We also find his name in the 34th or Cornwallis's, so he may have served in both corps. As all readers know, he saw much of the Flanders wars, and his little son heard many a story of these stirring times, which he put into the mouth of Uncle Toby and his Corporal Trim. A short time before his death, after a lapse of nigh fifty years, these childish recollections came vividly back to the Reverend Laurence, and he drew up for his daughter a short and tolerably accurate sketch of his early life. If 'jerky' in style, it is a very dramatic bit of narrative, and tells us all that is wanting. 'Roger Sterne,' he begins abruptly, 'was married to Agnes Hebert, widow of a captain of good family. Her family name was (I believe) Nuttle, though upon recollection that was the name of her father-in-law,' (how characteristic this; he would not pause to correct or re-write his first statement), 'who was a noted sutler in Flanders, in

Queen Anne's wars, where my father married his wife's daughter (*N.B.*—He was in debt to him), which was in September 25, 1711, old style. This Nuttle had a son by my grandmother—a fine person of a man, but a graceless whelp—what became of him I know not. The family (if any left) live now at Clonmel in the South of Ireland.'

From this we gather that the improvident lieutenant actually married when on campaign—married a widow, too—and under pressure. '*N.B.*—He was in debt to him.' The son makes a natural mistake in calling Nuttle her father-in-law, whereas he was merely her stepfather. The name may have been Herbert, but there is a French name Hèbert. I am inclined to think that this lady was herself of foreign extraction from the later troubles she brought on her son, and the sort of hysterical persecution she subjected him to. In Sterne's face, too, there was something of a foreign cast.

One daughter had been born abroad, and another child was expected when the regiment was ordered to Clonmel, the war being now over.

'At which town,' goes on the little story,

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

'I was born, November 24th, 1718, a few days after my mother arrived from Dunkirk. My birthday was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after our arrival, with many other brave officers, broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children.' The Shandean touch here — '*our* arrival' — will be noted. The elder was Mary; 'she was born in Lisle, in French Flanders, July 10th, 1712, new style.' (Mr Sterne must have had his family Bible open before him as he wrote):— 'This child was most unfortunate; she married one Wimmins in Dublin, who used her most unmercifully, spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself, which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend's house in the country and died of a broken heart. She was a most beautiful woman, of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate.

'. . . . The regiment in which my father served being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried with the rest of his family, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived.

She was daughter to Sir Roger Jaques, and an heiress. There we sojourned for about ten months, when the regiment was established, and our household decamped with bag and baggage for Dublin. Within a month of our arrival, my father left us, being ordered to Exeter, where in a sad winter, my mother and her two children followed him, travelling from Liverpool by land to Plymouth. (Melancholy description of this journey not necessary to be transcribed here.) In twelve months we were all sent back to Dublin. My mother, with three of us (for she lay in at Plymouth of a boy, Joram), took ship at Bristol for Ireland, and had a narrow escape from being cast away, by a leak springing up in the vessel. At length, after many perils and struggles, we got to Dublin. There my father took a large house, furnished it, and in a year and a half's time spent a great deal of money.'

The regiment now known as Chudleigh's Thirty-fourth—that officer having succeeded Colonel Hamilton—was reformed in Dublin. We have the list of officers now before us, with even the uniform they wore.—

The colonel was Chudleigh, the lieutenant-colonel, Whitney, the major, Charles Douglas: the captains were Hayes, Dawes, Doige, Moore, Matys, Shelton and Pyott: the lieutenants, Sanbeyeres, Yard, Cooksay, Brereton, Hamilton, Tremaigne, Batten, Phillips, White, Hayes and Ford: the ensigns, Sirck, *Roger Sterne*, Sutton, Shaddy, Bilson, Parker, Price and Wickham. Only an ensign, after all his campaigns and wanderings! They wore a tri-cornered hat, a full-skirted, scarlet coat, turned up with the brightest yellow facings, a scarlet waistcoat, white trimmings and white gaiters.*

In Dublin he presently found many of his name. Here was the Bishop of Dromore, Enoch Sterne, later Swift's friend, with Henry Baker Sterne, both clerks to the Parliament. On Ormond quay we find the firm of Nuttall & M'Guire, the former possibly a connection of the ensign's wife.

'In the year 1719,' goes on the story, 'all unhinged again, the regiment was ordered, with many others, to the Isle of Wight, in order to embark for Spain in the Vigo Expedition. We accompanied the

* From War Office Records.

regiment, and were driven into Milford Haven, but landed at Bristol, from thence by land to Plymouth again, and to the Isle of Wight — where I remember we stayed encamped some time before the embarkation of the troops—(in this expedition from Bristol to Hampshire we lost poor Joram—a pretty boy, four years old, of the small-pox). My mother, sister and myself remained at the Isle of Wight during the Vigo Expedition, and until the regiment had got back to Wicklow in Ireland, from whence my father sent for us. We had poor Joram's loss supplied during our stay in the Isle of Wight by the birth of a girl, Anne, born September 23d, 1719. This pretty blossom fell at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin; she was, as I well remember, of a fine, delicate frame, not made to last long, as were most of my father's babes. We embarked for Dublin, and had all been cast away by a most violent storm, but through the intercessions of my mother, the captain was prevailed upon to turn back into Wales, where we stayed a month, and at length got into Dublin, and travelled by land to Wicklow,

where my father had for some weeks given us over for lost. We lived in the barracks at Wicklow one year (1720) when Devijeher (so called after Colonel Devijeher) was born; from thence we decamped to stay half a year with Mr Fetherston, a clergyman, about seven miles from Wicklow, who, being a relation of my mother's, invited us to his parsonage at Animo. It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt. The story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland, where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me. From hence we followed the regiment to Dublin, where we lay in the barracks a year. In this year, 1721, I learned to write, etc. The regiment, ordered in 1722 to Carrickfergus in the North of Ireland, we all decamped, but got no further than Drogheda, thence ordered to Mullingar, forty miles west, where by Providence we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle and kindly entreated us for a year, and sent

us to the regiment at Carrickfergus, loaded with kindnesses, etc. A most rueful and tedious journey had we all, in March, to Carrickfergus, where we arrived in six or seven days. Little Devijeher here died; he was three years old. He had been left behind at nurse at a farmhouse near Wicklow, but was fetched to us by my father the summer after. Another child sent to fill his place, Susan; this babe too left us behind in this weary journey.'

All which is a most piteous story, and yet dramatic. The poor ensign must have been well-nigh crushed and heart-broken as he dragged about his family from place to place, pausing only for some fresh addition to his burdens. The little Laurence's wonderful escape from the mill-wheel was, curiously enough anticipated in the case of his great-grandfather, who, we are told, 'playing near a mill, fell within a clow. There was but one board or bucket wanting in the whole wheel, but a gracious Providence so ordered it that the void place came down at that moment, else he had been inevitably crushed to death.' His descendant probably enough transferred this accident to himself,

though his account had all the particularity of personal recollection—the people crowding to see him—and which is truly national.

It was now determined to put Laurence, who was about eleven years old, to school. At Halifax, close to Heath, was a free grammar school, founded by Queen Elizabeth, principally for the benefit of children from the parish and district of Halifax; but the master was allowed to take a number of pupils to board, not upon the foundation. At this school was young Tristram 'fixed' by his father. The choice was natural. We find 'Richard Sterne, Esquire,' in the year 1727, one of the governors. Squire Simon had been buried in Halifax Church; and young Laurence could be fairly placed upon the foundation, as a child of the parish.

Laurence, then eleven years old, must have brought with him learning sufficient 'to read English, and to be promoted to the Accidence,' according to the quaint provision of the charter.

His master was Mr Thomas Lister.

'The autumn of that year, or the spring after, I forget which,' goes on the story, 'my father got leave of his colonel to fix

me at school, which he did near Halifax with an able master with whom I stayed some time.'

This compliment the master well-deserved, for at least his judgment and sagacity, witness this instance.

'I remained at Halifax till about the latter end of that year (1731), and cannot omit mentioning this anecdote of myself and schoolmaster. We had had the ceiling of the schoolroom new whitewashed — the ladder remained there. I one unlucky day mounted it and wrote with a brush in large capital letters LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius and he was sure I would come to preferment. This expression made me forget the stripes I had received.' No doubt the master saw here some ardour for reputation.

The boys too, could admire the spirit of their daring companion. A Colonel Longridge, who came to the school shortly after Sterne left, saw the inscription still uneffaced. There were then traditions among

the boys of the lad's cleverness and wit. Some of his sayings even were repeated. The schoolroom still remains with the great oak beam across the ceiling on which the name had been inscribed.

Many years ago there was placed in the writer's hands an interesting 'curio,' no other, indeed, than one of Laurence's school-books. Its title was *Synopsis Communium Locorum ex Poetis Latinis Collecta*, and more characteristic evidence of the erratic character of the boy could not be imagined. It was a soiled, dirty book, every page scrawled over with writing, sketches, repetitions of his own name and those of his fellows—'L. S., 1728,' the letters being sometimes twisted together in the shape of a monogram. On the title-page, in faint brown characters, was written, in straggling fashion, the owner's name: 'Law: Sterne, September ye 6, 1725.' We find also some of his schoolfellows' names, such as 'Christopher Welbery,' 'John Turner' (a Yorkshire name), 'Richard Carre, ejus liber,' 'John Walker,' with '*Nickibus Nonkebus*,' '*rorum rarum*,' etc. There is a stave of notes, with the 'sol fa,' etc., written be-

low, and signed 'L. S.' Then we come on this:—'*I owe Samuel Thorpe one halfpenny, but I will pay him to-day.*' On another page we read '*labour takes panes,*' 'John Davie,' 'Bill Copper,' the latter, no doubt, a school nickname. But on nearly every page of this dog-eared volume was some rude drawing or sketch done after the favourite school-boy rules of art. One curious, long-nosed, long-chinned face has written over it, '*This is Lorence,*' and there is certainly a coarse suggestion of the later chin and nose of the humorist. There are owls, and cocks and hens, etc., a picture of 'A gentleman,' and several, as we might expect, of soldiers, one, especially, in the curious sugar-loaf cap seen in the picture of the 'March to Finchley,' with the wig and short-stock gun and strap. We find also some female faces, early evidence, perhaps, of our hero's later tastes. Then we come on the words 'A drummer,' 'A piper,' and this compliment, '*puding John Gillington.*' Sometimes the name which figures everywhere is spelled 'Law: Sterne—his book.'

Mr Thackeray, who had no love for Sterne, describes him at this period fanci-

fully enough: — 'Yonder lean, cadaverous lad, who is always borrowing money, telling lies, leering at the housemaids, is Master Laurence Sterne, a bishop's grandson, and himself intended for the Church. For shame, you little reprobate! But what a genius the fellow has! He shall have a sound flogging, and as soon as the young scamp is out of the whipping-room give him a gold medal. Such would be my practice were I Doctor Birch, and master of the school.'

A morning paper, published long after, when he was grown up and famous, furnishes a bare line or so in reference to this school time. 'At school,' it runs, 'he would learn when he pleased, and not oftener than once a fortnight.'

While he was at the school the sad news of his father's death reached him. It overtook the worn and weary soldier in the midst of fresh wanderings. 'To pursue the thread of my story,' his son writes, 'my father's regiment was, the year after, ordered to Londonderry, where another sister was brought forth — Catherine, still living, but most unhappily estranged from me by

my uncle's wickedness and her own folly. From this station the regiment was sent to defend Gibraltar at the siege, where my father was run through the body by Captain Philips* in a duel. (The quarrel began about a goose.) With much difficulty he survived—though with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships it was put to, for he was sent to Jamaica, where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first, and made a child of him, and then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an arm-chair and breathed his last, which was at Port Antonio, on the north of the island. My father was a little, smart man —active to the last degree in all exercises, most patient of fatigue and disappointments of which it pleased God to give him full measure. He was in temper somewhat rapid and hasty, *but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design, and so innocent in his intentions that he suspected no one, while you might have cheated him ten times in a day*

* Philips' name occurs in the list of officers in Chudleigh's regiment as Christopher Philips.

if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose. My poor father died in March, 1781.'

This sketch, in spite of its disjointed style, is as masterly as anything in his efficient writings. But how clearly the underlined passages show from what original my Uncle Toby was drawn.

The whole sketch of the father's nature is happily embodied in the 'most patient of fatigue and disappointments' of which he had, indeed, the fullest measure. No doubt there were many instances told in the family of his simplicity and amiable credulousness. It was on this element of character that the writer seized, and he wrote up and elaborated it in his own admirable fashion. Another side of the character—the patience of suffering and hardship—was given in the story of Le Fever, whose pathetic end came about exactly harmonious with that of the poor lieutenant.

Many years ago,* Mr. Ball, writing in *Macmillan's Magazine*, gives an account of Preston Castle in Hertfordshire. He adds

* [July, 1873.]

this speculation as to the original of my Uncle Toby:—

'In the day of Laurence Sterne,' he says, 'the owner of Preston Castle was a certain Captain Hinde, who was at once the old soldier and the country gentleman. My father, who lived near the village of Preston, was told by the late Lord Dacre, of The Hoo, in Hertfordshire, that this Captain Hinde "was Sterne's Uncle Toby." My father ascertained that the fact was well known to the Lord Dacre of the "Tristram Shady" period, and had been transmitted in the Dacre family from father to son. His lordship added, that a very old man named Pilgrim, who had spent his young days in the service of Captain Hinde, might be found some few miles from The Hoo. My father sought an interview with Pilgrim, the venerable patriarch of a lonely little village, and in the course of a long conversation gathered evidence which clearly traced my Uncle Toby to a real-life residence at Preston Castle. Pilgrim, in his youth, had an uncle who was butler at The Hoo, some five miles from Preston. This uncle well

remembered the famous Mr Sterne as one of Lord Dacre's visitors, and once heard him conversing with his noble host about "Tristram Shandy."

'"My Uncle Toby was drawn from life," said Mr Sterne. "It is the portrait of your lordship's neighbour, Captain Hinde."

'Pilgrim told of the sayings and doings of his old master. Captain Hinde was a veritable Uncle Toby. He gave an embattled front to his house—the labourers on his land were called from the harvest-field by notes of the bugle, and a battery was placed at the end of his garden.

'He had the most extraordinary love for all living things. Finding that a bullfinch had built her nest in the garden hedge, close to his battery, he specially ordered his men not to fire the guns until the little birds had flown. To fire these guns was his frequent amusement, but he would not allow a sound to disturb the feathered family.'

Lord Dacre certainly was a friend of Sterne's, and on the whole I think we may accept the theory that Sterne grafted on the sketch of his father these particular humours

of Captain Hinde. It is clear that his father would have no opportunity of exhibiting such pleasing eccentricities.

DR JAQUES STERNE AND HIS NEPHEW

CHAPTER II.

DR JAQUES STERNE AND HIS NEPHEW.

BY the time Laurence left Halifax School, he was close upon nineteen. The position of the widow and her children was almost critical. She had, however, well-to-do connections, one of whom took care of Laurence. Some pittance,* however, must have been left to her, for I find that in August 18th, 1732, she took out administration in the Irish Court, in which instrument her name and those of her three children, Maria, Catherine and Laurence, are given.

His cousin, Richard Sterne of Elvington, now, as he says, 'became a father to me, sent me to the university, etc.'—the odd 'etcetera' standing for much more kindly aid in the shape of money. He was entered at Jesus College,† Cambridge, and his tutor was Mr Cannon.

*[A pension of 20l. a year.]

†Dr Corrie, the master, long since dead, kindly furnished me with the details connected with Sterne's residence here.

On July 6th, 1733, he obtained a sizarship, and on July 30th of the following year he was elected scholar on Archbishop Sterne's foundation—of course, a sort of family compliment. The only one of his college friends whose name has reached us was John Hall Stevenson, who was also to obtain celebrity for his loose writings. '"Twas there,' says Sterne, 'that I commenced a friendship with Mr H—— which has been most lasting on both sides.' He was 'a gay spirited youth,' according to Mr Cole, the antiquary. 'Tom Hall I recollect well at college, where he was an ingenious young gentleman, and very handsome.' It is odd that he does not recall his more brilliant and equally 'ingenious' companion. In a letter, *Morning Post* memoir, it is stated that 'he read a great deal, laughed more, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his tutors. He left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, who had no harm in him, and who had parts, if he would use them.' It was at Cambridge that he had the first of those pulmonary attacks—the breaking of a blood-vessel in his chest—which clung to him steadily all

the rest of his life. He had a narrow escape, and recollected it long after. And it must be borne in mind, when we come to weigh any shortcomings, what frail, feeble frames his parents furnished to their young family; and how he only, and the scapegrace sister, as she may be called, escaped shipwreck out of all the Devijehers, Jorams, and the rest, that put out to sea with him. On the 29th of March, 1735, he matriculated, and in the January of the following year he took his Bachelor's degree.

On the 6th of March, 1736, the Dr Richard Reynolds, Bishop of Lincoln, was ordaining deacons at Buckden, in Huntingdonshire, and among the candidates was a thin, spare, hollow-chested youth, with curiously bright eyes, and a Voltairean mouth, who had come from Jesus College, Cambridge. The name of the new deacon was Laurence Sterne, B.A., from Yorkshire. Previously, his University had granted to him the usual testimonials for Orders, which were dated on the 28th of February, 1736. Finally, at the quaint and almost Shandean town of Chester, it may be mentioned in anticipation, that on 20th of August, 1738,

he was ordained priest, by Dr Samuel Peploe, then Bishop of Chester, and became the Reverend Laurence Sterne.

Through the interest of his uncle, Dr Jaques Sterne, a person of great importance, political and local, our new clergyman was appointed to a vicarage close to York. Ordained on August 20th, he was, on the 25th, inducted into the living of Sutton on the Trent; it was in the gift of Archbishop Blackburne. In July 1740 he took his Master's degree. In this year, his uncle also obtained for him a Prebend in York Cathedral, worth about £40 a year; with this he also held the minor Prebend of Pocklington, worth only £10. But he had a house in Stonegate, near the archbishop's palace, where he could come 'into residence.' *

York was then a pleasant city to live in, with a theatre that had some reputation; families came 'for the season,' and there was plenty of winter gaieties, and balls at the Assembly Rooms. No place, however,

* The late Mr Durrant Cooper, F.S.A., furnished me with these and many other important details. He possessed Sterne's letters of ordination which are now in the British Museum.

could be more full of local jealousies and political turmoil. Much of this was owing to a leading character of the place, the Dr Jaques Sterne alluded to. Jaques Sterne was one of the sons of Simon Sterne, and next in order to the late Roger Sterne. He was named Jaques after Sir Roger, the father of the heiress. He figures in the fierce election contests of the day, was a strong 'no popery' man; he was, as I have said, a great pluralist. He was a Canon Residentiary, a Prebendary, and Precentor of York Cathedral—the precentorship coming to him in the year 1785, by way of guerdon for the election services of the preceding year. He was, besides, Rector of Rise, and Rector of Hornsea-cum-Ritson in the East Riding—offices slender, it must be confessed, in their emoluments, but still acceptable. By-and-by, in the year 1746, came the Archdeaconry of Cleveland, and, ten years later, he was Prebendary of Durham, and, in 1750, Archdeacon of the East Riding.

There are some letters preserved of this persevering churchman's, which show in an amusing way how eager he was in prosecuting his interests when any opening offered.

He thus wrote to one of his political patrons:—

My Lord,—The Archbishop of Canterbury having some time ago applied to your Grace in my favour, for succeeding Dr Hayter in his Prebend at Westminster, when it should become vacant by his promotion, I hope your Grace will pardon my application, upon Dr Hayter's present promotion. I am very sensible it does but ill become me to mention to your Grace how often, and at what a vast expense, I have, for a number of years, been using my best endeavours for promoting His Majesty's service in this country. But I hope your Grace will the more readily excuse my naming it, since I was so happy as to hear your Grace express your approbation of my behaviour, when you acquainted his present Grace of Canterbury, then Archbishop of York, how the Deanery of York was disposed of, and was pleased to add, that though I could not receive that mark of the King's favour, yet that some other was intended for me. There is no doubt but your Grace will have many applications for this Prebend, but if your

Grace is inclined to honour me with your notice at this time, there can't long be wanting an opportunity, from Dr Manningham's ill state of health, of distinguishing any other person whom your Grace is pleased to think of also.—I am, my lord, with all duty, your Grace's most obedient, humble servant.

'YORK, *Oct. the* 14*th*, 1749.'

The obsequious divine used some ingenious arts to propitiate the man whom he was importuning.

'MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,'—he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle—'The Vicarage of Alborough is become vacant, which I made my option some time ago, that I might secure a clerk agreeable to your Grace in your own borough. I shall await your Grace's commands, and I am, my Lord, with all duty, your Grace's most obedient, humble servant, JAQUES STERNE.

'BATH, *May* 13, 1750.'

We find that a few months later the minister was pleased to accept this form of compliment:—

'My Lord,—In obedience to your Grace's commands, which were signified to me by the Archbishop of York, Mr Goodricke, the clerk whom Mr William recommended has been collated to the Vicarage of Alborough. I take the liberty of acquainting your Grace with this instance of my duty, and shall continue to make the same living my option, that, if any future occasion offers itself, I may have again the honour of receiving your commands about it.—Being, my Lord, your Grace's most dutiful and most obedient servant, Jaques Sterne.

'York, *Nov.* 10, 1750.'

It was foolish of the nephew to quarrel with so valuable a patron. But Laurence was too independent or perhaps too mercurial to become a mere creature or tool.

'My uncle and myself,' he tells us, 'were then upon very good terms, for he soon got me the Prebend of York; but he quarrelled with me afterwards, because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers. Though he was a party-man, I was not, and detested such dirty work, thinking it beneath me. From that period, he became my bitterest

enemy. By my wife's means I got the living of Stillington. A friend of hers in the south had promised her, that if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living became vacant he would make her a compliment of it.

'I remained near twenty years at Sutton, doing duty at both places. I had then very good health. Books, painting, fiddling and shooting were my amusements; as to the 'Squire of the parish, I cannot say we were upon a very friendly footing, but at Stillington the family of the C——s (Crofts) showed us every kindness, 'twas most truly agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends. In the year 1760, I took a house at York for your mother and yourself, and went up to London to publish my two first volumes of Shandy. In that year Lord Falconbridge presented me with the curacy of Coxwould, a sweet retirement comparison of Sutton. In sixty-two I went to France before the peace was concluded, and you both followed me. I left you both in France, and two years after I went to Italy for the recovery of my health, and when I called upon you,

I tried to engage your mother to return to England with me—she and yourself are at length come, and I have had the inexpressible joy of seeing my girl everything I wished her.

'*I have set down these particulars, relating to my family and self, for my Lydia, in case hereafter she might have a curiosity, or a kinder motive, to know them.*'

Thus concludes the quaint and vivacious little sketch which we could wish longer.

LOVE-MAKING AND MARRIED LIFE

CHAPTER III

LOVE-MAKING AND MARRIED LIFE

MR. STERNE, who was destined through life to be eminent in what are called 'affairs of the heart,' had not been long in York before he fell in love. The Lady of his affections was Miss Elizabeth Lumley, and in his autobiography he gives this sketch of the affair. 'At York I became acquainted with your mother, and courted her for two years. She owned she liked me, but thought herself not rich enough, or me too poor, to be joined together. She went to her sister's in S——, and I wrote to her often. I believe then she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so. At her return she fell into a consumption, and one evening that I was sitting by her with an almost broken heart to see her so ill, she said, "My dear Lawry, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live, but I have

left you every shilling of my fortune." Upon that she showed me her will. This generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her in the year 1741.'

Miss Lumley—'My L.' as she is called in the letters—came from Staffordshire, where she had a small property. Her father was Rector of Bedal. She is said to have had a 'fine voice' and a good taste in music. Some forty years later, his daughter published her father's love letters to her mother, and incurred much censure for her 'indelicacy" in so doing. But it should be said that Mrs Sterne herself had stipulated that if any letters of her husband were published these should be included. This daughter introduces them with this odd apology,—

'In justice to Mr Sterne's delicate feelings, I must here publish the following letters to Mrs Sterne, before he married her, when she was in Staffordshire. A good heart breathes in every line of them.'

The intimacy of the lovers was fostered by the aid and sympathy of a true confidante. This lady—who in some way recalls the gloomy mediatrix between Dora and

David Copperfield—is only known to us as 'The good Miss S——.'

Her friend had a sort of rustic retreat outside York—'a little, sungilt cottage on the side of a romantic hill'—to which he had given the fanciful name of 'D'Estella.' It was decorated with an abundant growth of 'roses and jessamines.' At other times Miss Lumley had 'lodgings' in York, where she resided by herself, and gave little 'quiet and sentimental repasts' to her lover. 'Fanny,' the parlour-maid of the lodgings, who used to wait at these quiet and sentimental repasts; and she, with Miss S——, unknown to posterity, makes up the quartette of actors in the lovesick little piece. Long, long after—when Mr Sterne had lived nearly all his life—it would seem as though the memory of these days had come back to him pleasantly, for he christened one of his Shandean characters 'The Curate D'Estella.'

When Mr Sterne came to York for his term of residence he lived in rooms in Stonegate. Long after—some thirty years after the humorist's death—a young and struggling actor, the first Charles Mathews, found himself in York, a member of Tate

Williams's company. With his wife, he was lodging in an old house in Stonegate which was known to be the house which Sterne occupied when he came to stay in York. The local tradition was that he had written his *Tristram Shandy* here, but this, of course, was hardly likely. It was difficult, however, to find a tenant for these quarters, as they had the reputation of being haunted; but the actor and wife, being very poor, could not afford to despise the accommodation, which was excellent and eke cheap. On the first night of their occupation, as the Minster clock tolled midnight, they were startled by three vivid knocks on the panel, and this visitation continued every night, until they at last became quite accustomed to it. No examination, however minute, could discover the cause; it at last ceased, and, curiously enough, simultaneously with the death of an old strolling actor named 'Billy Leng,' who lodged in the house. It turned out that this man, being bedridden, every night when he heard the Minster clock, used to strike three blows with his crutch on the floor to summon his wife to attend on him.

For two years it went on. They were as 'merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the archfiend *entered that undescribable scene*,' when suddenly it went forth that 'My L.' must return forthwith to Staffordshire, to her sister Lydia, afterwards married to 'The Rev. Mr Botham, Rector of Albany, in Surrey, and Ealing, in Middlesex.' For, from being 'as merry and as innocent as our first parents,' they are on a sudden reduced to the depths of an utterable anguish.

The way in which his emotions effected Mr Sterne, if his own account be not exaggerated, was a little serious. Miss Lumley came out to 'D'Estella' to have one last look, and as soon as she had retired and the last farewells were exchanged, he took to his bed, 'worn out by fevers of all kinds.' The confidante, Miss S——, 'from the forebodings of the best of hearts,' was not far away, and seeing him in this miserable condition, wisely insisted on his making an effort, and getting up and coming to her house. Her presence had an odd, even comic, effect on Mr Sterne's feelings. 'What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been

able to see the face of this mutual friend but *I feel myself rent in pieces?*' He was induced to stay with her an hour, during which 'short space' he seems to have grown almost hysterical, for he 'burst into tears a dozen different times,' and was visited 'with affectionate gusts of passion.' In this critical state Miss S—— was presently 'constrained to leave the room and *sympathise in her dressing-room;*' which delicious expression stands for a whole world of sentimental distresses and associations.

She returned, however, shortly, and thus addressed the agitated lover,—'I have been weeping for you both,' said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity, 'for poor L.'s heart I have long known it,' and proceeds to administer other shapes of consolation. Comforted, yet not cured, Mr Sterne could only 'answer her with a kind look and a heavy sigh,' and then withdrew to the absent Miss Lumley's lodgings, for he had found a sort of dismal relief in promptly hiring them on her departure. The maid 'Fanny,' however, was in the secret of his state, and had prepared a little supper. ('She is all attention to me,' he wrote to his mistress.) But he

could only 'sit over it with tears. A bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other.' The memory of 'the quiet and sentimental repasts' rose up before him. The moment she 'began to spread the little table' his heart fainted within him. 'One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!' said he, in despair. 'I gave a thousand penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child. I do so this very moment, my L.; for as I take up my pen my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L.' Then Mr Sterne brings once more 'Fanny' upon the scene, 'who contrives every day bringing in the name of L.' Then a little artfully relates a number of personal matters that 'Fanny' had remarked in him, or mentioned to him; how 'she told me last night, upon *giving me* some *hartshorn*' (how skilful this stroke!) 'she had observed my illness began on the very day of your departure for S——; that I had never held up my head, *had seldom or scarce*

ever smiled, had fled from all society; that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door but *she heard me sigh heavily;* that I never ate or slept or took pleasure in anything as before.' Mr Sterne, than whom none knew well how to perform on that difficult instrument, woman's heart, felt that a little satisfied vanity would predominate over sympathy with his sufferings.

The fate of these love letters is a curious one. They were preserved for over twenty years. Mr Sterne kept a regular letter-book, making copies of all his own. Not long before his death, being engrossed with what was to prove his very last *grande passion*, 'ambling it along on his haunches,' he turned back to these old effusions and copied out the more effective passages to send to his new mistress!*

Miss Lumley at last gave way. As we have seen, she fell into a consumption, and sitting with him one evening showed him the will in which she had left him all her fortune, telling him,—'My dear Laury, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I

[* Consult the *Journal to Eliza.*]

have not long to live,' etc. 'This generosity,' says the lover, naively enough, '*overpowered me.*' We might be inclined to think that up to this time he had been what is called 'shilly-shallying.' Overpowered as he was, he ought never to have forgotten this handsome treatment. After which, the marriage took place accordingly in the cathedral, as we find from the registry.*

* "Mrs Elisabeth Lumley of Little Alice Lane, within the close of the Cathedral on 30th March 1741, Easter Monday—Elisabeth, daughter of Rev. Robert Lumley, Rector of Bedal, County York, by Lydia, widow of T. Kirke, died about 1772.—*Register.*"

AT SUTTON

CHAPTER IV

AT SUTTON

WE next find Mr Sterne and his bride established at his Sutton Vicarage.

It was a pretty spot, with a musically-sounding name, stretching along the banks of the Derwent in an irregular street of nearly a mile long. Elvington, too, was but a pleasant walk away; and—most acceptable charm of all—York, with its good society in mansions and 'coffee-houses,' within easy riding distance.

Now was to begin the serious business, as it was to prove in his special case, of working out the grand problem of nuptial life—the solving of those puzzling riddles 'in the married state,' of which, as Mr Shandy assured his brother Toby, 'there are more asses' loads than all Job's stock of asses could have carried.' 'Nature,' as he says in another place, 'which makes everything so well to answer its destination,' still

'eternally bungles it in mating so simple as a married man.' The pair were certainly ill-matched, but then, where was the wife that would have matched Parson Yorick? He was a mercurial, crazy being, passionately fond of pleasure, quick, brilliant in his ideas, ready with jest and epigram; whereas it is clear that Mrs Sterne was a sober, matter-of-fact 'body,' literal in her thoughts, and not at all 'keeping up' to her lively husband.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that he drew her in Mrs Shandy,* though, of course, the obstreperous, argumentative Shandy must naturally have suggested such a partner were it only to 'bring him out.' 'She had a way, 'Mrs Shandy had,' and that was never to refuse her assent and consent to any proposition my father laid before her, merely because she did not understand it, or had no idea to the principal word or term of art upon which the tenet or proposition rolled. She contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and god-

*[The sketch given here of Mrs Sterne is not in accord with what is now known of her temperament. She was far from being a Mrs Shandy. Consult the Letter of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

mothers promised for her, but no more; and so would go on, using a hard word twenty years together, *and replying to it too*, if it was a verb, in all its moods and tenses, without giving herself any trouble to inquire about it.'

'I wish,' says Mr Shandy, raising his voice, 'the whole science of fortification at the devil, with all its trumpery of saps, mines, blinds, gabions, fausse-brays—!'

'*They are foolish things*,' says Mrs Shandy.

'Not that they are, properly speaking, Mrs Wadman's premises,' said Mr Shandy, partly correcting himself, 'because she is but tenant for life.'

'*That makes a great difference*,' says Mrs Shandy, with placid assent.

'In a fool's head,' replied Mr Shandy.

Nothing can be happier than this stroke.

Many years ago the late Lord Houghton described to me a pen-and-ink drawing he had somewhere picked up, an extraordinary caricature of a lady with a masculine face, an enormous chin and hooked nose, a very unpleasant-looking thing. She wears a sort of lace bodice with a broad ribbon round

her neck and bow behind. The point of the matter is that below are written in Sterne's recognisable hand these words:—'*Mrs Sterne, wife of Sterne.*' In the corners is '*Pigrich Fecit.*' Mr Sterne was fond of sketching, but this effort of his art has a rather ugly significance. The sketch seems to have passed to the Bailiff of Guernsey, who allowed M. Paul Stapfer to have it engraved for his *étude*, 'Laurence Sterne, *sa personne, et ses ouvrage.*' Nathanial Hawthorne mentions that he saw in a shop in Boston—the English Boston—a pair of portraits of Mr and Mrs Sterne, and adds that he thought the lady disagreeable-looking. At the first all went harmoniously enough. The lady had musical tastes, the vicar played on the bass viol and she accompanied him, which prompted him to this absurdity—a comic imitation of tuning the 'cello,—

Ptr—r—r—ing—twing-twang—prut-prut. 'Tis a cursed bad fiddle! Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no? Trut—prut. *They should be fifths.* 'Tis wickedly strung—tr—a-e-i-o-u—twang—. The bridge is a mile too high, and the "sound-post" absolutely down, else—trut—prut—. Hark!

'tis not so bad a tone. Diddle, diddle, diddle, diddle, dum—twaddle-diddle, tweedle-diddle, twiddle-diddle, twoddle-diddle, twuddle-diddle—prut—trut—krish—krash—krush.'

He said long after, as to matrimony, 'My wife is easy, and I should be a beast to rail at it.' By that time, however, the poor lady had found that it was useless to be anything else but 'easy.' He found Sutton a dull place enough.

Long after, when laying his book at Mr Pitt's feet, he tells him that the quarter of England whence it comes is 'a by-corner of the kingdom,' and that the house in which it was written was 'a retired, thatched house.'

When he brought home his bride, he found his parsonage sadly out of repair. The 'retired, thatched house,' in the 'by-corner of the kingdom,' had been handed over to him in no very habitable condition, and much outlay had to be incurred before the pair could settle themselves comfortably. The chimneys were decayed, and the flooring, thatch and plastering needed restoration generally. When the business was done, the vicar went into his vestry, opened his

registry, and made the following truly Shandean entry:—

'A. Dom. 1741.

	£.	s.	d.
'Laid out in sushing the house,.....	12	0	0
'In stuccoing and bricking the hall,.....	4	6	0
'In building the chair-house,.....	5	0	0
'In building the parr. chimney,.....	3	0	0

'Spent in shaping the rooms, plastering, underdrawing, and jobbing, *God knows how much!*'

Another entry runs:—

'In May 1745, a dismal storm of hail fell upon this town, and upon some other adjacent ones, which did considerable damage both to the windows and corn. Many of the stones measured *six inches (!)* in circumference. It broke almost all the south and west windows, both of this house and my vicarage at Stillington. L. STERNE.'

Not content with this prodigy, he later sets down among the marriages and births, another marvel:—

'Hail fell in the midst of summer *as large as a pigeon's egg*, which unusual occurrence I thought fit to attest under my own hand. L. STERNE.'

These must have been Shandean jokes. This parish register was also the receptacle for his horticultural notes.

'MDM.—That the Cherry Trees and Espalier Apple Hedge were planted in ye gardens, October ye 9th, 1742. Nectarines and Peaches planted the same day. The pails set up two months before.

'I laid out in ye Garden, in ye year 1742, the sum of £8, 15s. 6d.

L. STERNE.'

And in 1748, we have another entry:—

'Laid out in enclosing the orchard and in Apple Trees, in ye year 1748, £5. The Apple Trees, Pear and Plumb trees, planted in ye Orchard ye 25th day of October, 1748, by L. STERNE.'

He took a great interest in farming, and made many experiments himself. He was a good neighbour, as will be seen from the following. A clerical friend had hay to dispose of, and Yorick thus exerted himself:—

'I have taken proper measures to get

chapmen for it, by ordering it to be cried at my two parishes; but I find a greater backwardness among my two flocks in this respect than I had imagined.' This was owing 'to a greater prospect of hay and other fodder than there was any expectation of about five weeks ago. It is with the uttermost difficulty, and *a whole morning's waste of my lungs*, that I have got sufficient men to bid up to what you had offered—namely, twelve pounds.' '*I have put them off*,' he says, '*under pretence of writing you word*, but in truth to wait a day or two *to try the market and see what can be got for it.*' *

It has always been accepted that the sketch of Yorick was intended for himself. During his life, indeed, he was often called Yorick. Yorick's parish was his own, and the little oddities and incidents he describes must assuredly have taken place at Sutton; the Shandean humours—particularly the patent given to the midwife.

* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 63, pt. 11, p. 587. This letter is not included in the published collection. There are many spurious letters—witness those in the *European Magazine*—so feebly and clumsily done as to ensure detection at a glance. But this 'Hay' letter bears the Sterne '*cachet*' unmistakably. [The 'Hay' letter has been reprinted in this edition. It is numbered XX.]

And well might his sturdy flock be surprised at the lean, lanky, and pale-faced figure, who seemed utterly without 'stamina' in the chest. In that curious face there could scarcely be said to be cheeks, but rather sides to the face with a long, Voltairean mouth, which stunted away at an angle, and a piquant nose.

Yorick was often to be seen riding, and 'had made himself the country-talk by a breach of all decorum; and that was in never appearing better or otherwise mounted than upon a lean, sorry jackass of a horse, value about one pound fifteen shillings, who, to shorten all description of him, was full brother to Rosinante.' Clearly another parish association, which ushers in that droll sketch of the universal request in which was this clerical nag: how at last, being wearied out with midnight expresses from parishioners for the use of his horse to fetch medical aid, and having lost many good steeds from these charitable loans, he was in self-defence driven to the device of keeping some wretched, worn-out hack, not worth the borrowing.

It is wonderful how one of his delicate

frame and figure could have so long stood the rough blasts and trying climate of Yorkshire. He had miserable health and may be said to have been always fighting off consumption. Something was radically wrong with his chest. At Cambridge he had 'broken a vessel in his lungs,' while the Yorick of the story was subject to 'an asthma' (which he 'caught by skating against the wind'), and to 'a vile cough.' Perhaps, after all, the rude but stimulating breezes and healthful air of Sutton and Cox-would were of service, and gave strength to that weak and ill-put-together frame.

With the 'squire of the parish'—Squire Harland—he was not on good terms; nor is one of his pattern of mind, delighting in sly and concealed humour, likely to be ever acceptable to the rude boisterous 'Westerns' of a country district. Far more suitable is an abundance 'of a mysterious carriage of body to cover the defects of the mind'—Tristram's translation of the French *mot* for gravity—the best clerical garment that can be put on. Among a few select friends, that 'life, and whim, and *gaieté de cœur*' must have made the Parson of Sutton a

delightful companion; but with the many-headed of the district—the dull, the starched, the unnoticed, the ill-natured—these were dangerous qualities. 'For with all this' he 'carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world, and at the age of twenty-six knew just about as well how to steer his course in it as a romping, unsuspicious girl of thirteen.' No wonder, then, that the 'gale of his spirits ran him foul ten times in the day of somebody's tackling;' and as 'the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way' it may be well conceived how much the mischief was complicated.

He beguiled an hour with writing sometimes poetry, often a sermon or essay. A characteristic specimen of his verse has been carefully preserved at Coxwould. These lines are in the quaint manner of the older devotional poetry, and in some way recall the tone of the 'Soul's Errand.' *

* The Rev. Mr Scott, late the incumbent of Coxwould, kindly favoured me with a copy of these lines. [*The Soul's Errand* is the second title to *The Lie*, a poem attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh.]

LIFE OF STERNE

THE UNKNOWN ⊙.

Verses occasioned by hearing a Pass-Bell.

By ye Rev^d^. M^r^ St—n.

Hark^e^ my gay Fr^d^ y^t^ solemn Toll
Speaks ye departure of a soul;
'Tis gone, y^t'e^ all we know—not where
Or how ye unbody'^d^ soul do's fare—
In that mysterious ⊙ none knows,
But ☉ alone to w^m^ it goes;
To whom departed souls return
To take their doom to smile or mourn.
Oh! by w^t^ glimmering light we view
The unknown ⊙ we're hast'ning to!
God has lock'd up ye mystic Page,
And curtained darkness round ye stage!
Wise ☿ to render search perplext
Has drawn 'twixt y^e^ ⊙ & ye next
A dark impenetrable screen
All behind wch is yet unseen!
We talk of ☿, we talk of Hell,
But w^t^ yy mean no tongue can tell!
Heaven is the realm where angels are
And Hell the chaos of despair.
But what y^ese^ awful truths imply,
None of us know before we die!
Wheth^er^ we will or no, we must
Take the succeeding ⊙ on trust.

AT SUTTON

This hour perhaps o^{r} Frd is well
Death-struck ye next he cries, Farewell,
I die! and yet for ought we see,
Ceases at once to breath and be—
Thus launch'd f^{m} life's ambiguous shore
Ingulph'd in Death appears no more,
Then undirected to repair,
To distant ⊙^{e} we know not where.
Swift flies the ♃, perhaps 'tis gone
A thousand leagues beyond the sun;
Or 2^{ce} 10 thousand more 3^{ce} told
Ere the forsaken clay is cold!
And yet who knows if Fr^{nds} we lov'd
Tho' dead may be so far removed;
Only ye vail of flesh between,
Perhaps yy watch us though unseen.
Whilst we, y^{ir} loss lamenting, say,
They're out of hearing far away;
Guardians to us perhaps they're near
Concealed in vehicles of air—
And yet no notices yy give
Nor tell us where, nor how yy live;
Tho' conscious whilst with us below,
How much y^{ms} desired to know—
As if bound up by solemn Fate
To keep the secret of y^{ir} state,
To tell y^{ir} joys or pains to none,
That man might live by Faith alone.
Well, let my sovereign if he please,
Lock up his marvellous decrees;
Why sh^{d} I wish him to reveal
W^{t} he thinks proper to conceal?

LIFE OF STERNE

It is enough y^{t} I believe
Heaven's bright^{r} y^{n} I can conceive;
And he y^{t} makes it all his care
To serve God here shall see him there!
But oh! w^{t} ⊙$_{s}$ shall I survey
The moment y^{t} I leave y^{e} clay?
How sudden y^{e} surprise, how new!
Let it, my God, be happy too— *

It will be recollected that Mrs Sterne had a kind friend 'in the south' who had made her a promise that if she ever married a

* When the French critic M. Stapfer was in England some five-and-twenty years ago, a Guernsey friend of his — vice-president of St Elizabeth College in that island—showed him an essay of Sterne's which belonged to a York lady. This was a sort of meditation on the plurality of worlds, no doubt suggested by Fontenelle's essay on the same subject. It is written in a pleasing, natural style, and the topics are set forth in rather parable way. It is addressed to a friend of his, Mr Cook. From the style alone, and the various allusions—to the orchard for instance, which was the scene of his meditation—and the handwriting, there can be no doubt of its authenticity. Sterne's handwriting is unmistakable, and can be recognised at once by anyone familiar with autographs; and this piece was duly compared with specimens of Sterne's handwriting, and was admitted by all to be his. In one of his Sutton entries, it will be remembered, he speaks of his orchard. The essay is of some length, and I am tempted to place some characteristic extracts before the reader:—

'So far I had indulg'd ye extravagance of my fancy when I bethought myself it was bedtime, and I dare swear you will say it was high time for me to go to sleep.

'I went to bed accordingly. From that time I know not what happen'd to me, till by degrees I found myself in a new state of being, without any remembrance or suspicion that I had ever existed before, growing up gradually to reason and manhood, as I had done here. The world I was in was vast and commodious.

Yorkshire clergyman, if the living became vacant he would make her a compliment of it. This was Stillington, which lay conveniently near to Sutton.

It was in the gift of Lord Fairfax, of that famous Fairfax family with which Mr Sterne was already connected by ties of marriage. This nobleman had estates in Kent, which would answer to the character of the 'friend of hers in the south.'

In due course the vacancy came, and the

The heavens were enlighten'd with abundance of smaller luminarys resembling stars, and one glaring one resembling the moon; but with this difference that they seem'd fix'd in the heavens, and had no apparent motion. There were also a set of Luminarys (A) of a different nature, that gave a dimmer light. They were of various magnitudes, and appear'd in different forms. Some had ye form of crescents; others, that shone opposite to ye great light, appear'd round. We call'd them by a name, wch in our language w^d^ sound like second stars. Besides these, there were several luminous (B) streaks running across ye heavens like our milky way; and many variable glimmerings (C) like our northlights.

'After having made my escape from the follies of youth, I betook myself to the study of natural philosophy. The philosophy there profess'd was reckon'd the most excellent in ye world and was said to have receiv'd its utmost perfection. After long and tedious study, I found that it was little else than a heap of unintelligible jargon. All I could make out of it was, that ye world we liv'd on was flat, immensely extended every way.'

It will be seen that these speculations are very much in the strain that was then fashionable, and is something after the pattern of Rasselas.

[This 'essay,' under the title of *A Dream*, is reprinted entire in the second volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

good friend presented Amanda's husband. In April, 1748, the Rev. Richard Musgrave and the Rev. Richard Levette had died, which caused a vacancy in the prebendal stall of Stillington. Attached to the stall was an incumbency, only a short distance from Sutton, worth forty-seven pounds a year. There was besides a profit rent of a house in York, amounting to the moderate sum of one pound six-and-eightpence. On the 18th of March the formal mandate for his induction was issued. He had thus become a sort of small pluralist, holding three prebends and three rectories.* Nothing could be more convenient. It was but two miles or so away from Sutton; by a little stretch of speech, it might be almost considered in the same parish. It was so happily situated that he could perform service at both places of a Sunday without inconvenience; and Stillington Church, where he preached, was justly admired as an elegant specimen of Gothic. Old Sutton Church still shows the dark oak pews (old-fashioned, closely grained as marble, and black as ebony) where Mr

* On the 3d of March a dispensation had been granted to him to hold these various livings together.

Sterne's parishioners sat and hearkened to him. And its roof is supported by files of oaken pillars, instead of stone or marble, against which the ancients of Mr Sterne's congregation leaned their heads and dozed tranquilly.

In the year of the Rebellion, 1745, Mr Sterne found himself in his vestry making a couple of entries of much more interest than anything connected with hailstones or espaliers. He wrote:—'Baptized in 1745. Oct. ye 1st.—Born and baptized Lydia, the daughter of the Reverend Mr Sterne and of Elizabeth his wife, daughter of the Rev. Mr Lumley, late Rector of Bedel.'

He had to make a more distressing one on the next day. 'Burials, 1745. Oct. 2.—Lydia, daughter of Mr Sterne, Vicar of Sutton.' This was Lydia the first, another Lydia coming later. The name was that of Mr Sterne's sister.*

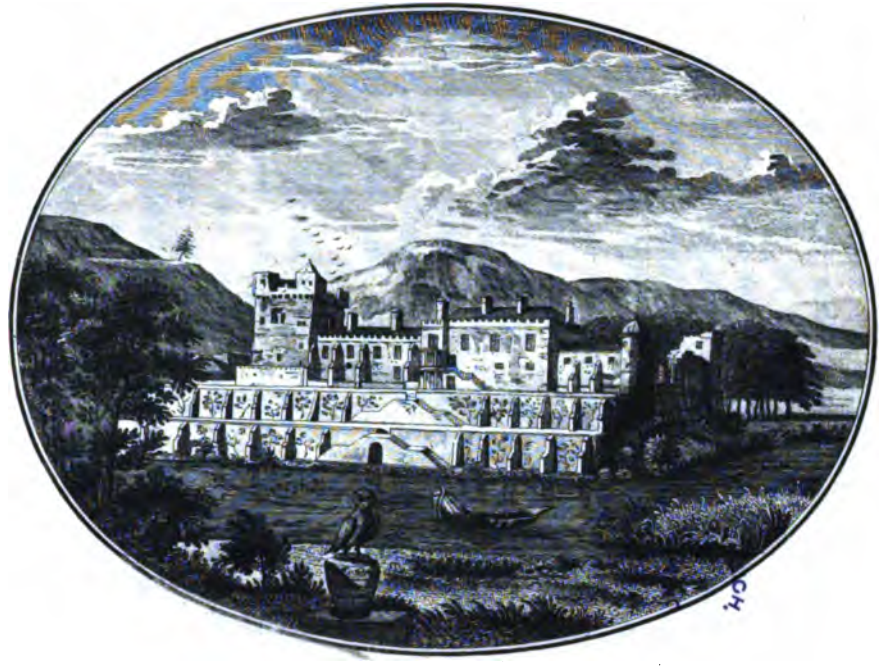
Nearly twenty years of this life were to pass by before Mr Sterne became known to the world. This seems but a late flowering and a long interval for a man of genius to

* [Sterne had no sister of this name. But the mother and a sister of Mrs Sterne were named Lydia.]

devote to such homely duties. But, as it will be seen, our vicar contrived to live in sufficient bustle, hurrying constantly into York, dining and stopping with neighbours. He had many friends, while the intrigues and factions of York furnished him with plenty of excitement.

It will be remembered that he met at Cambridge the loose and clever John Hall Stevenson, the owner of Crazy Castle, and writer of *Crazy Tales*. As he was Sterne's fast friend — companions, perhaps, for the friendships of the dissolute are not very fast—some account of him may be found interesting. About that time Dr Carlyle, the writer of some entertaining memoirs, was at the 'Granby' at Harrogate, where the two gentlemen were who pleased him much—'hands of the first water,' a friend styled them. This was Mr Hall and Colonel Charles Lee, an American, who were both intimates of Yorick. Hall appeared to be a 'highly-accomplished and well-bred gentleman.' A few days later they all sat up drinking together till six in the morning.

Skelton Castle, known as Crazy Castle, rose from the edge of a dull and solemn



lake, by a succession of terraces, fortified like bastions, on the topmost platform of which the old castle rambled away, to the right and left, in a succession of low cloisters, propped up with buttresses, breaking out in the centre in a large clump of building. At one end was a tall, square, sturdy tower; on the other rose a thin clock-turret, with a rusted cupola (such as are to be seen in old Belgian country-houses), surmounted by a conspicuous weather-cock. This picturesque but disorderly pile is said to have dated from the fifteenth century.

The turret, with its rusted cupola and weather-cock, was a conspicuous object in the Shandean landscape. It furnished innumerable jokes and allusions to Mr Sterne and his friend.

Mr Hall was born in 1718, and was thus but five years younger than his friend Mr Sterne. It has been seen they were at Cambridge, and belonged to the same college, where Hall was a fellow-commoner. Unfortunately, he fell into the ways of the fashionable professors of vice. The orgies of the 'Twelve Monks of Medmenham' were then attracting not so much reprobation as

curiosity, and it is believed that this 'ingenious young gentleman' was one of the unholy brotherhood.*

With this godless fraternity has Mr Sterne's name been associated, and certainly without warrant.† At the same time it must be conceded that, by his close fellowship with these merry but abandoned men, he has fairly laid himself open to the charge of partnership in their transgressions. And there is a Latin quotation in *Tristram*, which has perhaps never been noticed, but which shows that, through his friend Hall, he was familiar with one of the secret *passwords*, as it were, of this Medmenham Society.‡ Mr Hall had travelled much, and had taken the necessary degree, by making the Grand Tour many times. But unfortunately for his reputation, the course his reading took, and the society into which his ideas led him, seem to have hopelessly de-

* Such as are curious about the manners and habits of this strange society may consult the *New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, where there is a description of the 'Abbey' by Mr Wilkes; also Johnstone's *Chrysal*, with the key given in Davis's *Olio*.

† See an entertaining Topographical Article in the *Quarterly*—on Berkshire.

‡ See *Tristram Shandy*, vol. v. chap. 36, beginning—'An observation of Aristotle's,' etc.

praved his tastes, even below the degraded standard then fashionable with men of the world; and, in the year 1762, he so far outraged public decency as to put forth a collection of metrical stories, entitled *Crazy Tales*, which Mr Elwin, the late accomplished editor of the *Quarterly*, has most justly described as 'infamous.' But it is more surprising that, in 1795, an editor should have been found to undertake the pious office of collecting these uncleanly remains, assisted by 'the worthy representative of the author's family, John Wharton, Esquire, of Skelton Castle, Member of Parliament for Beverly,'—who, 'with the utmost liberality and politeness, presented the publisher with corrected copies of the greater part of these works.'

It is well known that it was in the library at Skelton that Sterne made most of his *Pantagruelis* studies. It was well stored with those rare and curious oddities, written after the pattern of Rabelais, which, however, were not rare then, or were not sought for as they are now. Here he primed himself for *Shandy*. I will not say a word for these curios, save that it must be borne

in mind that the coarseness and grossness of three centuries ago was regarded simply as humour, as a truthful statement, or, as we say, calling a spade a spade. Among the lowest classes there are allusions and statements common enough, but accepted as a matter of historic or literal statement, but which would shock ears polite. On these volumes, such as the rare *Serèes* of Bouchet, Mr Sterne browsed; here he found the *nasal* literature, as it might be, and many a queer, comic story, which he later 'adapted' for *Shandy.**

Sterne liked Crazy Castle. From many quarters of the Continent his heart, untravelled, fondly turned to the old walls. He delighted in the print of it on 'Crazy Tales,' done by Stevenson himself; and far away, at Toulouse, looks at it 'ten times a day, with a *quando te aspiciam.*' He honours the man 'who has given the world an idea of our parental seat.' 'Oh,' he breaks out, 'how are you all at Crazy Castle?' He was always scared at the notion of the sacrilegious masons, and pleaded hard and

* Dr Ferrier actually came upon the copy of the *Serèes* which Sterne had used at Skelton.

comically for the old Shandean mansion. 'But what art thou meditating with axes and hammers? . . . . thou lovest the sweet visions of architraves, friezes, and pediments, with their tympanums.'

During the life of Hall Stevenson this intervention was successful. It existed, safe but dilapidated, until the year 1788, when a grandson of Mr Hall, who had become a Wharton, was seized with the fatal pestilence of pulling down and setting up. The unholy work was carried out wholesale, and with a sort of steady frenzy. The magnificent wooded glen which lay, as in a bowl, was flooded, the woods mercilessly cut down, and the strange rococo series of terraces barbarously levelled. The modernisers did their work with fury; not a stone was spared—not even the huge, square Norman tower, almost unique in the kingdom.

Mr Sterne always writes to him in a strain specially affectionate and confidential, and altogether different from what he adopts to others. To him he discloses every thought freely. 'I long to see thy face again!' he writes, again and again. Even Mrs Sterne relished this companionship, and, though

frowning, could not but enjoy his company. 'She swears you are a fellow of wit, though humorous,—a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic, and (bating the love of woman) as honest as gold.' If they talked together in the same droll, Cervantic fashion in which they do in their letters, their company must have been entertaining indeed.

He figures in *Shandy* as Eugenius. He was sometimes visited by a sort of hypochondriacal humour, which usually preyed on him when the wind was in the east. When Crazy Castle was full of company, it was no surprise, of some sharp morning, to find their host absent, and suffering a moody imprisonment in his room, so long as the wind was in this obnoxious quarter. His humour was known and accepted without astonishment. Upon the quaint, old-fashioned clock-tower was a weather-cock, which was in full view of Eugenius's room; and when he rose in the morning, his first glance was at the fatal arrow, and its direction regulated the destiny of the day. This was a favourite subject for standing jests between them. To this friend Mr Sterne could be as Shandean, when scribbling, as

he was to the public when spinning *Tristram*. 'Touched with thee (sensibility),' writes Yorick in his *Sentimental Journey*, 'Eugenius draws my curtain when I languish — hears my tale of symptoms, and blames the weather for the disorder of his nerves.'

Once, when Crazy Castle was full of company, and the Shandean carnival rife, the wind suddenly veered round to this unlucky quarter, and with the usual results. The owner imprisoned himself close in his room, spoke of 'death and the east wind as synonymous,' and by no persuasions could be got to stir from his chamber. But the arch-humorist, his friend Laury, was staying there, and to him a Shandean notion presented itself. He sought out an active urchin of the place, encouraged him overnight, by a sufficient bribe, to scale the weather-cock tower, and tie down the arrow, in a due-west direction, with a strong cord. Early next morning the captive looked forth dismally from his 'square tower,' and joyfully observed the change; hurried down, ordered his horse, and took a smart ride, 'execrating east winds:' Hall Stevenson

was Hall Stevenson again! But a few days later the cord broke, and he relapsed.*

At a distance this friend seems always solicitous about this dangerous flaw in his character, and is always ready with cheering words and suitable encouragement. 'I rejoice from my heart down to my reins,' he writes from Toulouse, 'that you have snatched so many happy and sunshiny days out of the hands of the blue-devils. If we live to meet and join our forces as heretofore, *we will give these gentry a drubbing*, and turn them for ever out of their usurped citadel. *Some legions* of them have been put to flight already; and I hope to have a hand in dispersing the remainder the first time my dear cousin sets up his banners again under the square tower.'

At his castle, Hall established a society which was called the 'Demoniacs,' one of the usual drinking clubs.

Of the 'Demoniacs' was the Reverend Robert Lascelles, one of the Harewood family—a sort of joker in orders, quite after Mr Sterne's own heart—a Cervantic priest. He was known among the brother-

* This device is also related of the ingenious 'Tom' Sheridan.

hood under the style and title of '*Panty*,' which was complimentary to his powers of humour, but scarcely to his cloth—'Panty' being a familiar contraction from 'Pantagruel,' one of Rabelais's heroes. He is rarely forgotten in Mr Sterne's letters to the Abbot: 'Greet Panty most lovingly on my behalf.' 'Saluta amicum Panty meum, cujus literis respondebo.'

Zachary Moore was another of the company, though scarcely so steady a member of the order as some of the rest. 'Who after associating with most of the great personages of these kingdoms,' says a scornful epitaph that was made upon him—'who did him the honour to assist him in the work of getting to the end of a great fortune, was exalted, through their influence, in the forty-seventh year of his age, to an ensigncy, which he actually enjoys at present in Gibraltar.'

There was also belonging to the society a very eccentric character named 'William Hewitt,' more familiarly known as 'Old Hewitt,' who died the year before Mr Sterne died. Readers of Smollett's *Peregrine* will recollect a foot-note devoted to

his praises. He is described as 'a sensible old gentleman, *but* much of a humorist.'

Another of these merry men was one alluded to as 'Don Pringello,' an architect which name is clearly a disguise for Pringle. The person who is alluded to as 'Cardinal S——,' in Mr Sterne's remembrances at the close of his letters, was 'great Scroope,' a well-known Yorkshire name. He sends his love frequently to 'the two Colonels,' one of whom was Colonel Hall, a relation of the host; the other possibly the Colonel Lee whom we saw figuring at Harrogate.

This was not very edifying company for the Vicar of Sutton. It will be recollected that, in the story Eugenius is always put forward as giving sound advice to his friend, begging of him to conform more to the ways and humour of those about him. Eugenius was always prophesying that his enemies would certainly be too much for him—in which forecast he showed sagacity —outlived his friend many years, and was long known as 'Crazy Hall,' and the Eugenius of Sterne. One who saw him in the year 1775, and was struck by the 'odd, thin figure in a dark scratch wig—the more

remarkable as everybody's hair was then powdered.' The same eccentricity broke out in other members of the family, and in one of the histories of Cleveland there is to be found a very amusing account of an odd lady, whose strange ways were well known through the country.

'DR SLOP'

CHAPTER V

'DR SLOP'

THE cathedral society at York had naturally attraction for the Vicar of Sutton.

We find in his Shandy what are certainly personal sketches of his brother canons and other officials, who are disguised in Didius, Kysarcious, etc. Among these was a medical practitioner of some practice and celebrity, named Burton. He was born at Colchester, June 9th, 1710, and took his degree at Rheims and Leyden.* He married Mary Hewson, January 2d, 1734.

This personage had many trials in his course, but the most serious of all was that of being exhibited to his contemporaries as Dr Slop.† The people of York were well accustomed to that 'little, squat, uncourtly figure, of about four feet and a half perpen-

* [John Burton was born at Ripon in 1697. He took the degree of M.B. at Cambridge and that of M.D. at Rheims.]

† Dr Belcomb assured Dr Ferrier that the luckless physician always bore this nick-name.

dicular height, with a breadth of back and a sesquipedality of belly which might have done honour to a sergeant in the Horse Guards, waddling through the dirt upon the vertebræ of a little diminutive pony.' He was often seen on the Yorkshire bridle-roads, strangely mounted, hurrying away to assist the ladies of 'Tom O'Stiles,' or 'John Noakes,' in their illnesses; familiar, too, in the City of York, in other directions besides his profession—and odious as a fly in the political ointment to the high apostles of loyalty who ruled the city.*

Romney was at this time a pupil of Steele, an indifferent portrait-painter, who was then travelling from town to town as 'an itinerant dauber.' He came to York about the year 1754 or 1755,† and his studio was often visited by the Vicar of Sutton. But Mr Sterne took more notice of the work of the pupil than of the master, and, with a discrimination which did credit to his judgment, praised and encouraged the youth who showed such promise. Such

* Dr Belcomb also assured Dr Ferrier that this tradition was long kept alive in York.

† [Exactly 1756–57.]

patronage, we are told, helped on Romney (who had just then made an imprudent marriage), but excited the jealousy of the master, 'Count Steele,' as he was called; for there were numbers 'who echoed Mr Sterne's opinions.'

This promising youth must have known by appearance the strange doctor, who was then one of the public characters of the place; and long after, when he came to paint many subjects from *Tristram Shandy*, he could scarcely have shut out the memory of the *accoucheur's* peculiar figure. There are therefore fair grounds for assuming that his picture of Dr Slop is in some respects a likeness.* He is there represented as something actually deformed, with a gross head and face disproportioned to his shapeless body—a really comic figure, and yet with something odious and venomous.

The *accoucheur*, however, was an antiquarian of much learning and research—witness his great tome of the Yorkshire 'Monasteries.' He was both F.R.S. and F.S.A. With much industry he had collected a vast mass of papers on Yorkshire antiqui-

* See *Life of Romney*.

ties, which near the close of his life he disposed of to receive an annuity for his wife. He made excavations, opening mounds—'Dane's Hills,' at Skepwith and other places. He had studied medicine abroad under Boerhaave. At one time he 'broke' for the large sum of £5000. He had unluckily written that 'five-shillings book' in midwifery, garnished with appalling plates, in one of which was depicted the author's own invention of a forceps—'the author's New Extractor' as he described it, which was furnished with claws, a 'steel slider' and jagged teeth. We know the ridicule with which both book and forceps were treated in *Shandy*. It was a work really in advance of its time, being stored with practical cases and examples, without the useless speculation which disfigures most medical treatises of the day. Long after his death, it received a posthumous tribute in the shape of a French translation, and in its new shape the famous plates were introduced to the French '*chirurgien-accoucheurs*.'

The 'five-shillings book' was entitled, *An Essay Towards a Complete New System*,

and is ushered in by complimentary letters from various learned societies. Even in this inappropriate domain he contrives to bring in a sort of political protest. 'This approbation,' he writes in his preface, 'of different societies is no less a satisfaction than an honour done me, as it will certainly be a means of depriving those *who abound with ill-nature, envy and detraction* of their greatest pleasure.'

There was a Scotch Dr Smellie, distinguished also in Dr Burton's branch of the profession, who had attained notoriety by the invention of a 'wooden' forceps, and various ingenious bits of mechanism, representing the human figure, on which he used to lecture to his students. Dr Burton, in addition to his other quarrels, became embroiled with this professor, whom Mr Shandy clearly alludes to under the name of 'Adrianus Smelvogt,' and who had introduced to the public a petrified child, which he called 'Lithopædus Senonensis.' Dr Smellie, however, fell into the mistake of taking the description, 'Lithopædus Senonensis,' for the proper name and country of some learned medical pundit, and actually quotes him in

his list of authorities. Mr Sterne has given the mistake immortality in a note:—'Mr Tristram Shandy has been led into this error, either from seeing Lithopædus's name of late in a catalogue of learned writers *in Dr* ——,' or by mistaking Lithopædus for Trinecavellius, from the too great similitude of the names.'

He also wrote a work on the 'Non-naturals,' a topic which was a favourite with Mr Shandy.

Dr Slop, as we know, is represented as a Catholic, and as a very disagreeable specimen of that faith. It is not quite clear, however, what his creed was. In this dedication to Archbishop Herring, he certainly speaks of 'your warm attachment to our laws and religion,' and 'of the days of ignorance, superstition and slavery.' And in a letter to Dr Ducavel, he writes of the Archbishop of Canterbury as being 'so deservedly at the head of our Church.' He was at least considered a Jacobite and a favourer of the proscribed religion.

He incurred the enmity of Dr Sterne, who persecuted him relentlessly. This arose from his opposing the Archdeacon on the

great 'infirmary question.' During the crisis of 1745, a subscription was set on foot for defence purposes, to which Mr Sterne gave £10—a large sum for a poor vicar—and his uncle £50. News had come that the Highlanders were on their road to York, and there was much alarm. Dr Burton asked leave to go out and secure some moneys of his, a proceeding that excited suspicion. Dr Sterne had him brought before the Recorder, where he 'made a blustering, often in such a hurry with hasty fury, that he could not utter his words; he perfectly foamed at the mouth, especially when I laughed and told him that I set him and his party at defiance.' He was, however, committed to York Castle, under a warrant signed 'J. Place and L. Sterne.' *

The latter then drew up a newspaper paragraph, which he had inserted in *Lloyd's Evening Post*, announcing that there was the greatest satisfaction at the arrest, which, however, was not the case, as the physican was very popular. Any violent and irregular proceedings followed on the part of Dr Sterne, who signed many warrants against

* Burton's narrative—*Liberty Endangered.*

his victim. It was later stated that he had even suborned witnesses. The luckless doctor was sent to London, kept in prison for a year, and at last discharged, much suffering in person and pocket. Lord Carteret addressed a letter of reprimand to the clergyman for his excess of zeal, and the corporation refused to grant him their freedom. In 1751, the doctor got into another squabble with Mr Thomson, at a city feast, when he refused to drink some extra-loyal toast. This led to a pamphlet in which he was charged with 'popish' tendencies. We hear of him at a ball at the Assembly Rooms, where he fell and sprained his foot. He died in 1772, having survived his enemy, the author of *Shandy*, some few years.

It seems extraordinary that Sterne should have drawn him with so much personality. Living, as he was, in the same city, or close to it, his situation would have been awkward and almost unendurable. Such gross ridicule seems all but incredible, and could only have been prompted by a sense of security, for the poor doctor had so many enemies to deal with that he would have thought his caricatures the most harmless.

We might speculate, was he the author of the paragraph sent by his uncle's direction to London? This is likely enough.

Meanwhile our Vicar was now pursuing his course, enlivening the dull round of parish work with social engagements. A jest of his at this time, uttered at one of the York coffee-houses, has been preserved. A young fellow had been flippantly inveighing against the clergy, dwelling on their hypocrises, and turning to Mr Sterne, asked if he did not agree with him. In reply, Mr Sterne began to describe a favourite pointer of his own, but which had the trick of flying at every clergyman he met. The other in necessity asked him how long he had the trick. 'Ever since he was a puppy,' was the reply. This was not specially brilliant, but was smart and was repeated.

The loss of the first Lydia was now supplied by the birth of a daughter, which we find entered in the Sutton register:—'Baptised 1747. December 1st.—Born and baptised Lydia, daughter of the Rev. Mr Sterne and Elizabeth his wife.' This was Lydia the second—both parents having a *penchant* for

the name—who was to prove as mercurial and wayward as her father.

He was now gaining reputation as a sort of 'star preacheder,' and was invited to preach at York on 'showy' occasions. Two of these deliverances deserve notice. One was a charity sermon for the Bluecoat Schools of York.

Good Friday, in the year 1747, was the rather strange day selected; and the sermon itself was the first work of Mr Sterne's that appeared in print. It is also curious as being the token of his affection he selected to send to one of the earlier objects whom he distinguished with his attentions. The subject was—'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath considered: A Charity Sermon, preached on Good Friday, April 17, 1747, in the Parish Church of St Michael-le-Belfrey, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs, at the Annual Collection for the Support of Two Charity Schools.' The text was the miracle of the barrel of meal 'that wasted not,' and the cruise of oil that did not 'fail.' The Shandean handling, as applied to sermons, was to appear some years

later in the 'Assize Sermon.' Reasoning on the natural expectance of the widow, that the prophet would recompense her son, he says naively,—'Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation!' When the prophet began to pray over the dead child, that it might be restored to life, he says quaintly,—'*He was, moreover, involved in the success of his prayer himself*'—passages which have quite the old divinity flavour. Then describing the scene where the child is restored to life, his taste for painting breaks out, and he pictures for his congregation the various figures of 'the piece.' 'It is a subject one might recommend to the pencil of the greatest genius, and would even afford matter for description here.' He hints presently at a very good inducement to Christian charity—viz., that 'So quickly sometimes has the wheel of Fortune turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.' He then entertains his audience with 'an anecdote of Alexander, the Tyrant of Pheres,' which 'antiquity has preserved;' and, drawing the picture of the churlish, uncharitable man, brings on 'the

Great Master of Nature,' and the quotation, not so well worn then as now,—

> The man that hath not music in his soul,' etc.,

—declaiming it as he had no doubt heard it declaimed upon the York boards.

But far more important was the 'Assize Sermon,' delivered before the Judges. He was chaplain to the High Sheriff—'Sir W. Pennyman, Bart.'—so that it was probably an official duty.

Seven or eight years later, when he was getting his *Tristram* puppets in order, he found his *brochure*, and the happy notion occurred to him of preaching it once more, not to assize judges and lawyers, but to a more humorous congregation, consisting of Dr Slop, Mr Shandy, and my Uncle Toby. The notes and interruptions being thus ingeniously fitted to the sermon (which was written long before), and the sermon itself not being originally intended for such adornments, show how very dramatic in their character were those serious compositions, and how they held in themselves, at a moment's notice, as it were, all the elements of Shandean comedy. 'Can the reader be-

lieve,' says Yorick, with a pardonable effrontery, that 'this sermon of Yorick's was preached at an Assize, in the Cathedral, before *a thousand witnesses*, ready to give oath of it, by a certain Prebendary of that church?' An evidence of the respectable size of the congregation.

To this second appearance we owe many delightful strokes of satire. How excellent the touch with which it opens, in reference to that questionable tone with which some divines introduce their text. 'For we trust we have a good conscience.'—Hebrews xiii. 18. 'Trust? trust we have a good conscience!' On which 'quoth my father,' very happily, 'you give that sentence a very improper accent, for *you curl up your nose*, man, and read it with such a sneering tone, *as if the parson was going to abuse the Apostle.*'

CATHEDRAL QUARRELS

CHAPTER VI

CATHEDRAL QUARRELS

DURING the course of his long residence at York and at his parish, his relations with his redoubtable uncle were of an uncertain, unsatisfactory kind, until at last a fierce quarrel broke out. The nephew, as we have seen, was under serious obligations to him, and owed his fortunate start in life to his patronage. The cause of the quarrel, it will be recollected, was that he would not write party paragraphs in the papers. 'Though he was a party man, I was not. I detested such dirty work.'

All the same, however, he would seem to have done a good deal of work in this way for his uncle, for in one of his letters he gives as a reason for writing *Tristram*, that he was tired of employing his brains for other people's advantage. ''Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an

ungrateful person.' This is likely enough the true reason for the breach.* The ungrateful person had refused some guerdon and his dependant had struck work.

Further, Sterne himself was exactly not correct in boasting himself no party man, for he took part in the cathedral dissensions, wrote pamphlets on his own account, etc. But it will be seen that there was a family quarrel raging between uncle and nephew.

This hearty dislike of Dr Sterne's was also inflamed by their somewhat constrained association in the cathedral work. The uncle, however, exhibited his animosity without the least regard to propriety. He, in fact, persecuted the unfortunate Laurence, and tried to injure him in many ways. In one instance, he exhibited a spite and malevolence that seems incredible, and the incident is worth describing as a specimen of the little quarrels and intrigues of the cathedral circle.

It was customary, when one of the canons or prebendaries was prevented taking his turn

* [For coffee-house gossip on the breach, see the Letter of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

of preaching, to allow him to engage a substitute, which put a few pounds in the pocket of some of his poorer brethren. The Rev. Laurence, having already shown talent in this line, was occasionally applied to. It is unconceivable that his uncle should have interposed to prevent his benefiting by this meagre aid. In a letter* of bitter complaint addressed to Archdeacon Blackburn, author of a book that made some noise, *The Confessional*, all the curious phases of the incident are set out in a very natural, unaffected way:—

SUTTON, *Nov.* 8, 1750.

'DEAR SIR,—Being last Thursday at York to preach the Dean's turn, Hilyard the Bookseller who had spoke to me last week about Preaching y^rs, in case you should not come y^rself told me, He had just got a Letter from you directing him to get it supplied—But with an intimation, that if I undertook it, that it might not disoblige your Friend the Precentor. If my Doing it for you in any way could possibly have endangered that, my Regard to you on all accounts is such,

* [For the complete text, see Letter V. in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

that you may depend upon it, no consideration whatever would have made me offer my service, nor would I upon any Invitation have accepted it, Had you incautiously press'd it upon me; And therefore that my undertaking it at all, upon Hilyards telling me he should want a Preacher, was from a knowledge, that as it could not in Reason, so it would not in Fact, give the least Handle to what you apprehended. I would not say this from bare conjecture, but known Instances, having preached for so many of Dr Sternes most Intimate Friends since our Quarrel without their feeling the least marks or most Distant Intimation, that he took it unkindly. In which you will the readier believe me, from the following convincing Proof, that I have preached the 29th of May, the Precentor's own turn, for these two last years together (not at his request, for we are not upon such terms) But at the Request of Mr Berdmore whom he desired to get them taken care of, which he did, By applying Directly to me without the least Apprehension or scruple—And If my preaching it the first year had been taken amiss, I am morally certain that Mr Berd-

more who is of a gentle and pacific Temper would not have ventured to have ask'd me to preach it for him the 2d time, which I did without any Reserve this last summer. The Contest between us, no Doubt, has been sharp, But has not been made more so, by bringing our mutual Friends into it, who, in all things, (except Inviting us to the same Dinner) have generally bore themselves towards us, as if this Misfortune had never happened, and this, as on my side, so I am willing to suppose on his, without any alteration of our opinions of them, unless to their Honor and Advantage. I thought it my Duty to let you know, How this matter stood, to free you of any unnecessary Pain, which my preaching for you might occasion upon this score, since upon all others, I flatter myself you would be pleased, as in genl, it is not only more for the credit of the church, but of the Prebendy himself who is absent, to have his Place supplied by a Preby of the church when he can be had, rather than by Another, tho' of equal merit.

'I told you above, that I had had a conference with Hilyard upon this subject, and

indeed should have said to him, most of what I have said to you. But that the Insufferableness of his behaviour *(sic)* put it out of my Power. The Dialogue between us had something singular in it, and I think I cannot better make you amends for this irksome Letter, than by giving you a particular Acc^{t} of it and the manner I found myself obliged to treat him wh^{ch} by the by, I should have done with still more Roughness But that he sheltered himself under the character of y^{r} Plenipo: How far His Excellency exceeded his Instructions you will percieve *(sic)* I know, from the acc^{t} I have given of the hint in your Letter, wch was all the Foundation for what pass'd. I step'd into his shop, just after sermon on *All Saints*, when with an air of much gravity and importance, he beckond me to follow him into an inner Room; no sooner had he shut the Door *(sic)* but, with the aweful solemnity of a Premier who held a Letter de Cachêt upon whose contents my Life or Liberty depended—after a minuits Pause, — He thus opens his Commission. Sir—My Friend the A. Deacon of Cleveland not caring to preach his turn, as I

conjectured, has left me to provide a Preacher,—But before I can take any steps in it with regard to you—I want first to know, Sir, upon what footing you and Dr Sterne are?—Upon what footing!—Yes, Sir, how your Quarrel stands?—Whats that to you?—How our Quarrel stands! Whats that to you, you Puppy? But, Sir, Mr Blackburn would know—What's that to him?—But, Sir, dont be angry, I only want to know of you, whether Dr Sterne will not be displeased in case you should preach—Go look; I've just now been preaching and you could not have fitter opportunity to be satisfyed.—I hope, Mr Sterne, you are not angry. Yes, I am; But much more astonished at your *Impudence.* I know not whether the Chancellors stepping in at this instant and flapping to the Dore, did not save his tender soul the Pain of the last word.

'However that be, he retreats upon this unexpected Rebuff, takes the Chancellr aside, asks his Advice, comes back submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr Hering had quite satisfyed him as to the grounds of his scruple (tho' not of his Folly) and therefore be-

seeches me to let the matter pass, and to preach the turn. When I—as Percy complains in Harry ye 4—

> . . . All smarting with my wounds
> To be thus pesterd by a Popinjay,
> Out of my Grief and my Impatience
> Answerd neglectingly, I know not what
> . . . . . for he made me mad
> To see him shine so bright & smell so sweet
> & talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman

——Bid him be gone & seek Another fitter for his turn. But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my case, so I was forced to tell him in plain Prose tho' somewhat elevated —That I would not preach, & that he might get a Parson where he could find one.

'It is time to beg pardon of you for troubling you with so long a letter upon so little a subject—which as it has proceeded from the motive I have told you, of ridding you of uneasiness, together with a mixture of Ambition not to lose either the Good Opinion, or the outward marks of it, from any man of worth and character, till I have done something to forfeit them. I know your Justice will excuse.

'I am, Revd Sir, with true Esteem and Regard of wch I beg you'l consider this letter as a Testimony,

'Y^{r} faithful & most aff^{te}

'Humble Servt

'LAU: STERNE.

'*P.S.*

'Our Dean arrives here on Saturday. My wife sends her Resp^{ts} to you & y^{r} Lady.

'I have broke open this letter, to tell you, that as I was going with it to the Post, I encountered Hilyard, who desired me in the most pressing manner, not to let this affair transpire—& that you might by no means be made acquainted with it—I therefore beg, you will never let him feel the effects of it, or even let him know you know ought about it—for I half promised him,—tho' as the letter was wrote, I could but send it for your own use—so beg it may not hurt him by any ill Impression, as he has convinced it proceeded only from lack of Judgm^{t}.

'To

'The Reverend Mr Blacburn,

'Arch-Deacon of Cleveland,

'^{at} Richmond.'

There is an impetuosity and controversial vehemence in all this, which shows that our divine was at this time much more of 'a party man' than he was inclined to admit. In the later and more notable portion of his career he was much more gentle, and his contact with an admiring world seems to have softened his nature. The correspondence, however, reveals a regular picture of the life in a cathedral town; for we are shown a bookseller arranging the 'turns' of the preacher, and actively trafficking in them according to favour or prejudice. The result, however, proved that the bookseller was justified in putting his questions. He was in terror of Dr Sterne's wrath, as will be seen from the following letter:—

'SUTTON, *Nov.* 12, 1750.

'When I set pen to paper in my last there was much less of spleen at the bottom of my Heart than there was of desire (as I hinted then) to have your good opinion—you tell me I have that, and I assure you there is no Man's I am prouder of:—How much I am sure it will add to what little reputation I have, I will not offend

you by declaring; I am certain that a Person who could drop so modest a hint of the little importance he was of can be no good judge of the matter, and as it will be impossible to convince him of it, I must rest satisfied with showing him at least what a price I set upon it by my endeavours on all occasions to keep and improve it.

'As for the future supply of any of your vacant turns you may be assured I should be willing to undertake them whenever you want a proxy, and if you have no friend you would choose to put up, you would even do me a *favor* to let me have them— I say a favor, For, by the by, my Daughter will be Twenty Pounds a better Fortune by the favors I've received of this kind from the Dean & Residentiaries this Year, and as so much at least is annually & without much trouble to be picked up in our Pulpit, by any man who cares to make the Sermons. You who are a Father will easily guess & as easily excuse my motive.

'I was extremely sensible of how much I owed to so friendly a wish, when you told me last summer how glad you would be to promote a Reconciliation, which had the

rapidity of my conference given me the least leisure to have thought on, I could not have uttered so undeserved and fast a reply as I did (what is that, &c.) which though directly meant as a rebuke to Hilyard, Yet I am even sorry the expression escaped me. It was my anger and not me, so I beg this may go to sleep in peace with the rest which I never had an inclination or even a power to remember, had you not desired it.....'* etc., etc., etc.

His uncle soon found out what was going on, and interposed. For malignity and family animosity his letter can hardly be matched. He wrote:—

'*Decem.* 6, 1750.

'Good Mr Archdeacon,—I will beg leave to rely upon your Pardon for taking the Liberty I do with you in relation to your Turns of preaching in the Minster. What occasions it is, Mr Hilyard's employing the last time *the Only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy nephew of my own,* the

* [The conclusion of this letter the editor is unable to discover.]

Vicar of Sutton; and I should be much obliged to you, if you would please either to appoint any person yourself, or leave it to your Register to appoint one when you are not here. If any of my turns would suit you better than *your own I would change with you. . . .*' *

This letter is endorsed—

'Mr Jaques Sterne—representative of his nephew Yorick,' and mentions of the Popish nunnery at York.†

At this juncture there now reappears upon the scene Sterne's mother, the widow, with her daughter, to persecute her son, the unhappy Vicar of Sutton. One of the most unfortunate, as well as the most undeserved of the calumnies upon Sterne's name, was the one that he had been a bad, undutiful son, and had left his mother to starve,

* This later portion is lost, but refers to the well-known convent at Micklegate Bar which Dr Sterne had attacked. These interesting letters are in the Museum. [The letter, of which Mr Fitzgerald thought a part lost, is given entire in this edition of Sterne's Works. It is numbered VII.]

† The 'Popish nunnery' still flourishes and is one of the most important institutes of the city. I may add that an aunt of my own lived and died there. [The letter is not exactly endorsed; but in another hand is written, beneath the date, "Mr Jaques Sterne, reprobation of his nephew Yorick and mention of the Popish nunnery at York." It will be observed that Mr Fitzgerald misread the so-called endorsement.]

while he indulged in beautiful sentiment. This gross charge has been always accepted chiefly owing to a thoughtless passage in one of Walpole's conversations with Mr Pinkerton,—'I know from indubitable authority that his mother, who kept a school, having run in debt, on account of an extravagant daughter, would have rotted in a jail if the parents of her scholars had not raised a subscription for her. Her own son had too much sentiment to have any feeling. A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother.' Byron put this epigrammatically, and thus helped the circulation of the story, saying that 'he preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother.' And Mr Thackeray, in our time gave renewed vitality to the tale.*

It will be seen that all Mr Walpole learned upon his 'indubitable authority' was the simple facts of Mrs Sterne's distress, and the subscription raised for her. It was quite con-

*Thackeray, who was nothing but a novelist, until he chose to turn historian and employed the late Mr Hannay to collect his facts for him, shows equal prejudice and ignorance in dealing with Sterne. He found him a capital subject for the cheap 'clap-trap' utterance that would 'take' in a public lecture-room, and he was at once scornful and sarcastic on poor Sterne's devices. Yet Thackeray's own writing is often quite open to such a charge.

sistent with this that her son might have assisted her. If he did not at all, or to the extent that was necessary, it must be considered that he was a poor, a very poor parson, struggling to support his own family. Even the 'deep sentiment' that it so ridiculed with the contrasted sketch of the dead donkey, were actual elements which, after all, would have helped him to make a little money, were he disposed to give relief.

Fortunately, however, we have materials for an almost complete vindication of Mr Sterne, in the shape of a letter* of inordinate length, addressed to his hostile uncle, in which he states his whole case. It shows that he was worried and persecuted past endurance by the importunities of this most unreasonable of parents, for whom he had done everything that was reasonable.

'My motive for offering to send my wife rather than myself, upon this particular business, being first merely to avoid the occasion of any plot which might arise betwixt you and me upon anything foreign to the Errand, which might possibly disapoint the end of

* [This letter, of which only parts with variations from the true copy are given here, is printed entire from the manuscript in *Letters and Miscellanies*. See Letter VIII.]

it, and secondly as I had reason to think your passions were pre-engaged in this affair, or that the respect you owed my wife as a gentlewoman would be a check against their breaking out; and consequently that you would be more likely to give her a candid hearing which was all I wished, and indeed, all that a plain story to be told without Art or Management could possibly stand in want of. As you had thought proper to concern yourself in my Mother's complaints against me, I took it for granted you could not deny me so plain a piece of Justice, so that when you write me word back by my servant "you desired to be excused from any conference with my wife, but that I might appear before you." As I foresaw such an interview with the sense I had of such a treatment was likely to produce nothing but an angry expostulation (which could do no good, but might do hurt), I begged *in my turn* to be excused, and as you had already refused so unexceptionable an offer of hearing my defence, I supposed in course, you would be silent for ever after upon that head, and therefore I concluded with saying "as I was under no necessity of applying

to you, and wanted no man's direction or advice in my own private concerns I would make myself as easy as I could with the consciousness of having done my Duty, and of being able to prove I had whenever I thought fit and for the future that I was determined never to give you any further trouble upon the subject." In this resolution I have kept for three years and should have continued so to the end of my life, laying open the nakedness of my circumstances, which for aught I knew was likely to make me suffer more in the opinion of one half of the world than I could possibly gain from the other part of it by the clearest defence that could be made.

'Under the distress of this vexatious alternative I went directly to my old friend and College acquaintance, our worthy Dean, and laid open the hardship of my situation, begging his advice what I should best do to extricate myself. His opinion was that there was nothing better than to have a meeting face to face with you, and my Mother, and with his usual friendship and humanity he undertook to use his best offices to procure it for me.

'Accordingly about 8 months ago he took an opportunity of making you this request, which he told me you desired only to defer till the hurry of your Nunnery cause was over.

'Since the determination of that office, he has put you in mind of what you gave me hopes of, but without success; you having (as he tells me) absolutely refused now to hear one word of what I have to say. The denying me this piece of common right is the hardest measure that a man in my situation could receive, although the whole inconvenience of it may be thought to fall as intended, directly upon me, yet I wish Dr Sterne a great part of it may not rebound upon yourself. For why, may any one ask, why will you interest yourself in a complaint against your Nephew if you are determined against hearing what he has to say for himself?—and if you thus deny him every opportunity he seeks of doing himself justice. Is it not too plain you do not wish to find him justified, or that you do not care to lose the uses of such a handle against him? However it may seem to others, the case appearing in this light to me it has determined me con-

trary to my former promise "of giving you no further trouble"—to add this, which is not to solicit again what you have denyed me to the Dean; (for after what I have felt from so hard a treatment, I would not accept of it, should the offer now come from yourself.) But my intent is by a plain and honest narrative of my Behaviour, and my Mother too to disown you for the future: being determined since you would not hear me, face to face with my accusers, that you shall not go unconvinced, or at least not uninformed of the true state of the case.

'It is not necessary for my Defence to go so far back as the loss of my Father, y^r^ brother, whose death left me at the age of 16 without one shilling in the world, and I may add *at that time*, without one friend in it except my cousin Sterne of Elvington, who became a father to me and to whose protection *then* I chiefly owe what I now am; for as you absolutely refused giving me any aid at my father's death, you are sensible. I should have been driven out naked into the world, young as I was, to have shifted for myself as well as I could.

'It is not necessary, I say, for my defence

to go so far back, nor do I recall it to your memory by way of recrimination for any seeming cruelty of yours towards me then (for the favours I received after gave me reason to forget it), and besides, I think you were the best judge of what you had to do in such a case, and were only accountable to God and your own conscience. But I previously touch upon this particuler for the sake of a single reflection which I shall make and turn to my account bye and bye.

'From my father's death to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish *her with* money, I seldom heard from her, and when I did the account I severally had was, that by the help of an embroidery school that she kept, and by the punctual payment of her pension, which is £20 a year, she lived well, and would have done so to this hour had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England. She has told you, it seems, "that she left Ireland then upon my express invitation." This, it seems, was not the case. Her son "rep-

resented to her the inhumanity of a mother *able* to maintain herself, thus forcing herself as a burden upon a son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me." In short, I summed up all those arguments with making her a present of twenty guineas, which with a present of cloathes, etc., which I had given her the day before.

'In the year 44 my sister was sent from Chester, by order of my mother to York, that she might make her complaint to you, and engage you to second them in these unreasonable claims upon us.

'This was the intent of her coming, though the pretence of her journey (*of which I bore the expenses*) was to *make* a month's visit to me, or rather a month's experiment of my further weakness. She stayed her time or longer, was received by us with all kindness, was sent back at my own charge with my own servant and horses, with five guineas which I gave her in her pocket, and a six and thirty piece which my wife put into her hand as she took horse.

'My wife and self took no small pains, the

time she was with us, to turn her thoughts to some way of depending upon her own industry, in which we offered her all imaginable assistance, first by proposing to her that, if she would set herself to learn the business of a mantua maker, as soon as she could get insight enough into it to make a gown and set up for herself, *that* we would give her £30 to begin the world and support her till business fell in, or, if she would go into a milliner's shop in London, my wife engaged not only to get her into a shop where she should have £10 a year wages, but to equip her with cloathes, etc., properly for the place; or lastly, if she liked it better, as my wife had then an opportunity of recommending her to the family of one of the first of our nobility, she undertook to get her a creditable place in it where she would receive no less than £8 or £10 a year wages, with other advantages. My sister showed no seeming opposition to either of the two last proposals till my wife had wrote and got a favourable answer to the one and an immediate offer of the other.

'It will astonish you, sir, when I tell you

she rejected them with the utmost scorn, telling me I might send my own children to service when I had any, but for her part, as she was the daughter of a gentleman, *she would not disgrace* herself, but would live as such. Notwithstanding so absurd an instance of her folly, which might have disengaged me from any further concern, yet I persisted in doing what I thought was right, and though after this the tokens of our kindness were neither so great nor so frequent as before, yet nevertheless we continued sending what we could conveniently spare.

'It is not usual to take receipts for presents made, so that I have not many vouchers of that kind, and my mother has more than once denyed the money I have sent her, even to my own face, I have little expectation of such acknowledgements as she ought to make. But this I solemnly declare, upon the nearest computation we can make, that in money, cloaths, and other presents, we are more than £90 poorer for what we have given and remitted to them. In one of the remittances (which was the summer my sister's visit), and which, as I

remember, was a small bill drawn for £8 by Mr Ricord upon Mr Baldeso, after my mother had got the money in Chester for the bill she peremptorily denied the receipt of it. I naturally supposed some mistake of Mr Ricord in directing. However, that she might not be a sufferer by the disappointment, I immediately sent another bill for as much more, but withal said, as Mr Ricord could prove his sending her the bill, I was determined to trace out *who* had got my money, upon which she wrote word back that she had received it herself but had *forgot it*. You will the more readily believe this when I inform you, that in December 47, when my mother went to your house to complain she could not get a *farthing* from me, that she carried with her *ten guineas* in her pocket which I had given her but two days before. If she could *forget* such a sum, I had reason to *remember* it, for when I gave it I did not leave myself one guniea in the house to befriend my wife, though then within one day of her labour, and under an apparent necessity of a man midwife to attend her.

'What *uses* she made of this ungenerous

concealment I refer again to yourself. But I suppose they were the same as in my sister's case, to make a penny of us both.

'When I gave her this sum I desired she would go and acquaint you with it, and moreover took that occasion to tell her I would give her £8 every year whilst I lived. The week after she wrote me word she had been with you, and was determined not to accept that offer unless I would settle the £8 upon her.

''Tis an absolute falsehood, and even so far from probability, that the character which both you and Mrs Custobadie had given me and my wife of her clamorous and rapacious temper, made us live in perpetual dread of her thrusting herself upon us.

'I do remember, sir, when I married I acquainted you that Mrs Sterne refused to have her own fortune settled upon her, and wished for no better security than my honour; to which you *then* answered, "*I was the more bound to take care that the Lady should be no sufferer by such a mode of her confidence.*" She never shall through my fault; though she has through my misfor-

tune and that long train of difficulties and drawbacks with which you know I began the world, as, namely, the whole debt of my school education, cloathing, etc., for nine years together, which came upon me the moment I was able to pay it. To this a great part of the expense of my education at the University, *too scantily defrayed by my Cousin Sterne*, with only £30 a year, and the last out of my Wife's fortune and chargeable upon it in case my wife should be left a widow. This she added was *your* particular advice, which without better evidence I am not yet willing to believe; because though you do not yet know the particulars of my Wife's fortune—you must know so much of it, was such an event as my death to happen shortly, without such a burden as this upon my widow and my child, *that Mrs Sterne would be as much distressed and as undeservedly so as any widow in Gt. Britain;* and though I know as well as you and my Mother that I have a *power in law* to lay her open to all the terrors of such a melancholy situation—that I feel I have *no power* in equity or in conscience to do so; and I will add in her

behalf, — considering how much she has merited at my hands as the best of wives, that was I capable of being worried into so cruel measure as to give away hers and her child's bread upon the clamour which you and my Mother have raised—that I should not only be the weakest but the *worst man* that ever woman trusted with all she had.

'In what light she represented so much affection and generosity I refer to your memory of the account she gave you in her return through York, But for very strong reasons I believe she concealed from you all that was necessary to make a proper handle of us both, which double game by the bye, my mother has played over again upon us, for the same purposes since she come to York, of which you will see a proof bye and bye.

'The very hour I received notice of her landing at Liverpool, I took post to prevent her coming nearer me, stayed three days with her, used all the arguments I could fairly to engage her to return to Ireland and end her days with her own relations, which I doubted not would have the effect I wanted. But I was much mis-

taken, for though she heard me with attention, yet as soon as she had got the money into her pocket, she told me with an air of the utmost insolence "That as for going back to live in Ireland, she was determined to show me no such sport; that she had found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at her ease, either at York or Chester."

'I need not swell this letter with all I said upon the unreasonableness of such a determination, it is sufficient to inform you that all I did say proving to no purpose I was forced to leave her in her resolution, and notwithstanding so much provocation, I took my leave with assuring her "That though my Income was strait I should not forget I was a son, though she had forgot she was a *mother*."

'From Liverpool, as she had determined, she went with my sister to fix at Chester, where though she had little just grounds for such an expectation, she found me better than my word, for we were kind to her above our power, and common justice to

ourselves, and though it went hard enough down with us to reflect that we were supporting both her and my sister in the pleasures and advantages of a town life, which for prudent reasons we denied ourselves, yet still we were weak enough to do it for 5 years together, though not without continual remonstrances on my side as well as perpetual clamours on theirs, which you will naturally imagine to have been the case, when all that was given was thought as much above reason by the one, as it fell *below* the expectations of the other.

'I convinced her that besides the interest of my wife's fortune, I had then but a bare hundred pounds a year; out of which my ill health obliged me to keep a curate; that we had moreover ourselves to keep, and in that sort of decency which left it not in our power to give her much; that what we could spare she should as certainly receive in Ireland as here; that the place she had left was a cheap country—her native one, and where she was sensible £20 a year was more than equal to 30 here, besides the discount of having her pension paid in England

where it was not due, and the utter impossibility I was under of making up so many deficiencies.

'The false modesty of not being able to declare this, has made me thus long to pay and my Mother, and to this clamour raised against me; and since I have made known thus much of my condition as an honest man, it becomes me to add *that, I think I have no right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child: and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my Mothers pension of £20 a year when I have as much to leave my Wife, who besides the duties I owe her of a Husband and the father of a dear child, has this further claim;—that she, whose bread I am thus defending was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised us so much sorrow uppon that score, brought not one sixpence into the family,—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that

she was the daughter of no other than a poor Suttler who followed the Camp in Flanders—was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a 4th part of what the government allows her, and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife.

'I suppose this representation will be a sufficient answer to any one who expects no more from a man, than what the difficulties under which he acts will enable him to perform for those who expect more. I leave them to their expectations and conclude this long and hasty wrote letter, with declaring that the relation in which I stand to you inclines me to exclude you from the number of the last. For notwithstanding the hardest measure that ever man received continued on your side without any provocation on mine, without ever once being told my fault, or conscious of ever committing one which deserved an unkind look from you, notwithstanding this and the bitterness of 10 years unwearied persecution, that I retain that sense of the service you did me at my first setting out in the world,

which becomes a man inclined to be grateful, and that, I am, Sir,

'Your once much obliged though now
'Your much injured nephew,

'LAURENCE STERNE.

'SUTTON ON THE FOREST,
'*April* 5, 1751.' *

It is clear from this that Dr Sterne had taken up the widow's case, not so much from sympathy as with a view of harassing and blackening his nephew. He had also, as the latter says, estranged this daughter by his 'wickedness, and her own folly.'

* 'Copied by permission of Mr Rob. Cole of Upper Norton Street from a copy carefully made by some person for Mr Godfrey Bosvile formerly of Gurthwaite, and bought by Mr Cole with many other papers of Mr Bosvile, July 25, 1851. A copy of a letter wrote by Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, to his uncle, Dr Sterne, April 5, 1751. [The copy of this letter is now in the British Museum. Mr Fitzgerald clearly misread the proper names. See Letter VII in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

A SERIES OF LETTERS

CHAPTER VII

A SERIES OF LETTERS

AMONG the canons of York was a Mr John Blake with whom Sterne was on terms of the greatest intimacy. They were constantly in council over some trouble or complication, and we find the Vicar of Sutton often fixing to go into York and meet his friend. Many years ago Mr Hudson of York kindly placed the whole unpublished correspondence of the pair in my hands. Letters of Sterne are the rarest of autographs, and but few are known—I shall therefore give the whole correspondence in this place.

There would appear to have been constant expeditions to York for dinners, parties and concerts, of which Mrs Sterne seems to have had her fair share. When her husband went to Newborough to meet Lord Falconberg, she went too. The next even-

ing she was 'engaged to the Cowpers,' while he, passionately fond of music, had set his heart on going to the York concert with his friend Fothergill.

These conferences seem to have borne some fruit; and, later, Mr Sterne is glad to hear 'some of the rubbish is removed, in order to your edification, which, I hope, will not be long delayed.' And then we get a characteristic glimpse of the Sterne conjugal relations. 'I tore off,' writes Mr Sterne to Mr Blake, 'the bottom of yours before I let my wife see it, *to save a lye.* However, she has since discovered the curtailment, and seem'd very desirous of knowing what it contain'd—which I conceal, and only say 'twas something that no way concerned *her or me;* so say the same if she interrogates.' That little '*to save a lye*' was plainly a little awkward secret of Mr Sterne's, and it is curious to find him writing his friend to tell a lie to 'save a lye.'

These difficulties being accommodated, Mr Blake was anxious to see his friend at his house in York; and Mr Sterne having, in some way, incurred the enmity of some of the parties in the affair, writes a practical

and sensible explanation of the motives for declining.

'DEAR BLAKE,—It is not often, if ever, I differ much from you in my judgment of things, therefore you must bear with me now in remonstrating against the impropriety of my coming just at this *crisis*. You have happily now concluded this affair, wch has been so often upon the eve of breaking off, and my coming would be the most *unseasonable* visit ever paid by mortal man. Consider in what light Mrs Ash and Miss must have hitherto look'd upon me, and should it ever come to light that I had posted over upon this termination of y^r differences, I know it would naturally alarm them, and raise a suspicion I had come over to embroil matters. Things being already settled, 'twould be thought I could have no other errand. But you seem to have a forboding of the same evil by y^r desiring me to come *privately*. I have weighed the point wth my wife a full hour, and she thinks we should not stake the disgust y^t may possibly be given upon the *chance* of my coming being kept a secret; for if I

come to-night I must stay all night, wch will discover it. If, to-morrow morning, both roads and streets will be full, as 'tis Martinmas day, and I declare I would not have my being with you known over the way for fifty pounds. I know you will do me the justice to believe I would run 7 times as far any other road to do you a 7th part of the kindness you ask. But I verily believe, w^ch^, by the by, makes me easy at heart, in my present staying at home, that you will do as well without me. If I can be of service, it must be in case some unforseen objection sh^d^ arise in either party, when you may whistle me to you in a moment's warning. However, my dear friend, if, after all, you think it necessary for you that we should have an hour's talk, I will give up my own judgm^t^ to y^rs^, and come over early to-morrow morning, tho' I rather wish, as does my wife, you would be ruled by us; and depend upon y^r^ own good abilities, w^ch^, I'm sure, are sufficient to carry you thro' now with *safety* and honor. I send my service to no mortal soul — and pray command y^r^ people to say nothing of y^r^ lad's being here to-day. I wish to God

you could some day, ride out next week, and breakfast and dine with us, w^ch^, if you do, it would be wise, in my opinion, to make *no secret* of it, but tell the ladies you are going to take a ride to Sutton, to carry the welcome news to y^r^ friends, that every thing was happily concluded. Dear sir, accept our most hearty congratulations upon it, and believe me.

'Y^rs^ most truly,

'LAU^E^. STERNE.

'*P. S.*—My servant is in town to-night, and will be in town to-morrow, when I will order him to wait upon you. I had collected all your letters, and burn't them before I rec^d^ y^rs^.'

Besides some heavy farming operations, he was concerned for his little girl Lydia, who was 'somewhat relapsing'—showing symptoms of that asthmatic affection for which he afterwards took her to France. He was waiting on the Dean, 'Jack Taylor,' and others, and seems to have had his hands full both at home, at Sutton, and when he came into York. At this time

too, reappears that poor, tramping Agnes Hebert, his mother, who has come to York—possibly after the Irish school bankruptcy—to meet her son, who has, it may be well conceived, 'much to say to her.' He was busy even now arranging some of her difficulties, for he writes, 'I trust my poor mother's affair is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, to hers.'

Mr Blake's 'distemper,' whatever it was, was, however, not mending, and again Mr Sterne writes one of his sensible letters, apparently referring to the marriage of his friend, full of sound, thoughtful advice, which may be set out at full length with profit:—

'My dear Friend,—We have ponder'd over the contents of y^{rs} again and again, and after the coolest and most candid consideration of every movement throughout this affair, the whole appears, what I but too shrewdly suspected, a contexture of plots agst y^{r} fortune and person, grand mama standing first in the dramatis personae, the Loup Garou or raw head and bloody bones to frighten Master Jacky into

silence, and make him go to bed with Missy, *supperless* and in peace—Stanhope, the lawyer, behind the scenes, ready to be call'd in to do his part, either to frighten or outwit you, in case the terror of grand mama should not do the business without him. Miss's part was to play them off upon y^r^ good nature in their turns, and give proper reports how the plot wrought. But more of this allegory another time. In the meanwhile, our stedfast council and opinion is, to treat wth Stanhope upon no terms either in person or proxy. Consider the case a moment—Your proposals (wch I trust will be soon offered by you to Mrs Ash in writing) will either be accepted or refused by her at first sight. If they are accepted, he is not wanted to be treated with. If they are rejected, he is the most improper man. The person call'd in such a case sh^d^ be *your* friend, not one who will widen the breach and fortify them in their opiniatre, but a cordial, kind body who will soften matters and lessen the distance between you. Such a one is not Stanhope, nor could be in honor either as their kinsman or council. So I beg leave to repeat

it again, keep clear of him by all means, and for this additional reason, namely, that was he call'd in either at first or last, you lose the advantage as well as opportunity of an honor^{ble} retreat wch is in y^{r} power the moment they reject y^{r} proposals, but will never be so again after you refer to him.

'I am, dear S^{r},
'most truly Y^{rs},

'L. STERNE.'

Presently Mrs Sterne was 'taking a wheel' into York to dine with Mr Bridges, a pleasant friend of her husband's, who was Mr Sterne's fellow artist in a characteristic caricature, to be described later. 'We have 2 gooses for you,' writes Mr Sterne to his cathedral friend; and later, sends one of the birds by a special messenger. 'The bearer,' he writes in his genial way, 'has brought you one of your gooses, and should have brought myself with it for company, but that I stay and wait till the afternoon to see if my poor girl can be left. She is very much out of all sorts; and our operator here, though a very penetrating man,

seems puzzled about her case. If something favorable does not turn out to-day about her case, I will send for Dealtry.' Not, it will be seen, for Dr Burton, who also had a reputation in York as a 'penetrating' man.

To Mr and Mrs Ash, Mrs Sterne also sent presents of 'gooses,' and the letter which accompanies the gift contains what seems to be the only pun of Mr Sterne's we are acquainted with. It, of course, referred to that Mr Stanhope, the solicitor, whom Mr Sterne had before painted in as a sort of arch-villain in the piece.

'*Saturday.*

'DEAR SIR,—My wife sends you and Mrs Ash a couple of stubble geese—one for each; she would have sent you a couple, but thinks 'tis better to keep y^r^ other Goose in our Bean Stubble till another week. All we can say in their behalf is, that they are (if not very fat) at least in good health & in perfect *freedome,* for they have never been confined a moment; I wish I could say as much of y^r^ worship—for I fear y^r^ affairs, as heretofore, confine & keep you in the dark,

and if I am any conjurer, you are at this hour, just where I left you (if you will allow a pun) STAND HOPEing yourself to death—was there ever so vile a conundrum? Pray God, that may be the worst on't, so believe me to be, what I truly am,

'Yrs cordially,

'L. STERNE.

'*P. S.*—As the goose is for yr mistress, my wife says, you must take the worst and send her the best, & that the next shall be better.

'I preach on Sunday at the Cathedral. Will you give me a breakfast, if I get to York early? Or will you be out of town?'

The earlier letters in the series are concerned with plans for renewal visits, but Mr Sterne seems to have been always in a state of unreadiness, and is found putting off the expeditions he had planned on various hindrances and pretexts. The friends appear to have stayed at each other's houses, and the whole turn of the correspondence is easy

and agreeable. Mr Sterne's name for his clerk, 'my Amen,' is quaint enough.

'DEAR SIR,—I see how your affairs approach to such a crisis, that no friendly office can be witheld by one who wishes you so well. But let me tell you the state of our affairs. To morrow we are indispensably obliged to be at Newborough (L^{d} F—g's) on Friday my wife has engaged herself in the afternoon at Cowper's—& I had both set my heart upon going to the Concert, & sent to engage Mr Fothergill to meet me there a little after three. However, from eleven that day to three, both me and my rib are at y^{r} service to club our understandings all together, and I'm sure we shall all be able in 4 hours to digest a much harder plann & settle it to y^{rs} and all our wishes; however, if any our plann should require a 2^{d} consideration we purpose being at Newbury on Saturday to see y^{r} Patron pass by, & you will know where to find me in case a half hours further conference should be wanted: If after these preliminaries are settled, I can be of use to you, you know you have no more to do but command me, & I shall be any day

the week following at y^r^ service, except Munday which is our Appeal day for the Land Tax.

'We thank you for y^r^ kindness in speaking for Mr Hungton. (?) But we have plann'd it better.

'All our kind wishes & complim^ts^ to you & the ladies, with service to Mr Lowther,

'Y^rs^ very truly,

'L. STERNE.

'SUTTON, *July* 5, '58.'

'DEAR BLAKE,—I send my Amen to enquire after you, never yet having been able upon any acc^t^ to get to you, the great confusion of *the Election* wch I hate as much as my friend Taylor does, kept me here during that period—& bad weather, bad roads, not good health, & much business, will not let me come for so long as I must stay when I do get to you, wch must be for 2 or 3 days—whether I will or no, I am forced out of *my shell* in Xmas week to preach Inn^ts^. I hope all goes on successfully with you & y^rs^ since the age I've had the pleasure of seeing you—pray let me

know it is so, & present all kind resp^ts to Miss C. &c. Pray tell me how long the Dean stays if you can—& if Taylor is in Town to whom my best services—If you have 3 or 4 of the last Yorks Courants, pray send one us, for we are as much strangers to all that has pass'd amongst you as if we were in a mine in Siberia.

'My wife & Lydia send all kind loves to you.—

'I am truly yours,

'L. STERNE.

'I hope you got y^r coat home safe, tho' in what plight I fear as it was a rainy night & ten o'clock at night before we reach'd Sutton, oweing to vile accidents to wch Journiers are exposed.

'Will you be so kind as to forward the note to Mr Cowpers any time before noon.

'I am, dear Sir, Your 'much obliged & faithful,

'L. S.

There is no note enclosed.

'*Monday.*

'DEAR SIR,—I have transacted my Bristol Affair all but a small point left for y^r^ good nature, wch is to put letter in the Post to day & pay *postige yourself* for it to Mr Oldfield for wch I've inclosed 8^d^ it being a double letter. If Oldfield s^d^ suspect 8 letters instead of two you may open it to convince him. But I think he will take your word, tho' perhaps not a Servant's. The Express (when God sends it) Monsr Apothecary will direct as agreed upon between us, & I think I have put the whole into such a train that I cannot well miscarry.'

'DEAR SIR,—I should have beat up y^r^ quarters before now, & but for the vile roads & weather, together with the *crisis* of my affairs namely the getting down my crop wch by the way is in danger of sprouting. However, I will come over at y^r^ desire, but it cannot be to morrow because all hands are to be employed in cutting my barly wch is now shaking with this vile wind—however the next day (Friday) I will be with you by twelve & eat a portion of y^r^ own dinner & confer till 8

o'clock, in case the day is fair, if not the day after, &c., &c. My wife is engaged to dine at Cowpers the first travelleable day & comes with me. I think Mr Moor will not expect (w^t^ his letter does not require) an answer—however, will overhaul y^r^ matter with all others.

'My wife sends her comp^s^ & what is more her wishes for you in this crisis of y^r^ distemper wch I wish likewise was well got over. For 'tis full of mystery and I think cannot end as we all once hoped and expected,

'Believe me, Dear Sir,
'most truly y^rs^,

'L. STERNE.

'5 o'clock.—I beg pardon for detain^g^ y^r^ stockings wch was the Maid's forgetfulness but she has a sweetheart in her head, wch puts all other things out, this I'm sure you'l excuse.'

'*Sunday Night.*

'DEAR SIR,—Not knowing what Day I shall be able to get to York this week, having Business of so many sorts to detain

me at home, I have order'd my Sinful Amen to wait upon You, That You might have an Opportunity of writing in Case you durst trust him a 2d Time or had Leisure as well as courage so to do. When I come, I have 4 personages I equally want to see. The Dean, Jack Taylor, yrself, & my Mother — & I have much to say to each, How I shall manage all in ye narrow compass of a writers Day, I know not; but when I get to York, I think my first hour will be with you & so on. I believe my wife will be at York on Tuesday, to make her last Marketings for the year. But will dine I dare say with Duke Humphry, as my girl is somewhat relapsing & the Mother you may be sure, not a little impatient to be back; — I wd have wrote on Saturday But in Truth, tho' I had both Time & Inclination, my Servants had neither ye one nor the other, to go a yard out of their Road to deliver it — They having set out with a Wagon Load of Barly at 12 o'clock, & had scarse day to see it measured to the Maltsman. I have 4 Thrashers every Day at work, & they mortify me with declarations, That There is so much Barly they

cannot get thro' that speces before X^mas^ Day, & God knows I have (I hope) near 80 Q^rs^ of Oats besides. How I shall manage matters to get to you, as we wish for 8 months.

'I thank God, however, I have settled most of my affairs—let my freehold to a promising tenent—have likewise this week let him the most considerable part of my tyths, and shall clear my hands and head of all county entanglements, having at present only ten p^ds^ a year in land and seven p^ds^ a year in Corn Tyth left undisposed of, wch shall be quitted with all prudent speed. This will bring me and mine into a narrow compass, and make us, I hope, both rich and happy. 'Tis only to friends we thus unbosome ourselves, so I know you'l excuse and believe me, y^rs^,

'L. STERNE.

'*P. S.*—Let me know how your affairs go on, and as distinctly as I have done mine.'

'SUTTON, *Saturday.*

'DR SIR,—This should have come to y^r^ hands yesterday morn^g^ (but was disappointed by a fellow who promised to call for it) to

have desired y^r^ Indulgences for my not being able to keep my word in being with you as I hoped and intended—nor can we for our souls leave home this day for reasons I shall tell you when I see you wch will be very soon, but I cannot fix wch of the three first days of the week it will be. It shall be the first in my power, for I want to see you full as much as you do to see me. In the meantime we hope 'twil be no Difference to your affairs whether Munday or Wednesday. My wife I told you is engaged & as I come alone I take pot luck. God bless & direct you in the meantime & believe me y^rs^

'with all respects,

'L. STERNE.

'To the Rev^d^ Mr Blake.'

'DEAR SIR,—It was very kindly done in you to send me the Letter to Sutton, & I thank you for y^t^ & all other friendly offices. But for the future you shall not be at such a trouble unless something *extraordinary* makes it adviseable, Because as you will always first peruse the acc^ts^, I am perfectly easy ab^t^ what is in y^rs^ knowing you will do

for me as for y^rself. You perceive That he will write from time to time to give us a proper preparation in Case the Event sh^d happen, upon wch preparation given by him it will be time enough for us to plann something more particular than what is done already, & it will be time enough when he writes me word That He grows worse, to settle the Matter of the Express with him in my Answer to that Acc^t. My wife joins in her kind Thanks to you with me for this—and I beg you'l

'believe me, Y^rs,

'L. S.

'*P. S.*—We decamp'd in such a Hurry on Sunday morn^g I could not snatch a moment to run to bid you adieu. But I know You excuse Formalities, wch by the by, I am a most punctilious regarder of wth all. But my Friends—Ld Carlisle * I suppose is not dead tho' Irrecoverable.

'To The Reverend Mr Blake.'

* [Richard Osbaldeston, to whom Sterne dedicated his first printed sermon. He became in turn Bishop of Carlisle and Bishop of London. His critical condition to which reference is made here cannot refer to the illness that ended with death in 1764. The reference must be to some previous alarm for the Bishop's life.]

'DEAR BLAKE,—Tho I know you could not possibly expect us on so terrible a day as this has fallen out, yet I could do no less than send over on purpose to testify our concern for not being able to get to you. We have waited dress'd and ready to set out ever since nine this morning to 12 in hopes to snatch any intermission of one of the most heavy rains I ever knew, but we are destined not to go for the day grows worse and worse upon our heads, and the sky gathering in on all sides leaves no prospect of any but a most dismal going and coming, and not wthout danger as the roads are full of water. What remains, but that we undress ourselves.

'Since you left us, we have considered (you know w^{t}) in all its shapes and circumstances, and the more the whole is weighed, the worse and more insiduous appears every step of the managem^{t} of that affair. God direct you in it, 'tis our hearty prayer, for I am, with my wife best respects to you,

'truly yours,

'Comp^{t} to ladies. 'L. S.'

From these letters a good idea may be

gathered of the Vicar's character, which was clearly that of a straightforward 'off-hand' man, with a curious suggestion of Sidney Smith. No one could associate them with the hypocritical, whining, sentimental lineaments that Mr Thackeray strove to draw. He was certainly, at this time at least, a hearty, pleasant fellow—good-natured, too. Witness the strain of this unpublished letter:—

'SUTTON, *Wednesday.*

'DEAR SIR,—I have sent you a large Quantity of Pepiermint w^h^ I beg you will disstil carefully for me. I observe you do not charge anything in y^r^ letter for the trouble and expense of making the last. I beg you'l not use any ceremony with this, for I hoped you would take it *in pence.* However, you may give Ricord a single bottle, and if y^r^ own shop is destitute of so precious a vehicle, I give you leave to do the same for yourself.'

But he was drawn into a local squabble connected with the Cathedral, and in which he was to make his first attempt at satirical writing.

Among the officials of the Cathedral was a certain Dr Topham, a lawyer, who enjoyed great local practice, and left a large fortune behind him. A fortune which his son, later, seems to have squandered in town in unbounded prodigality. This son was sent to Cambridge — was put into the Horse Guards — and drove a curricle with four black horses.* He is better known, perhaps, as the biographer of Elwes, the miser, but always took most pleasure in the thought that he had furnished the occasion of Mr Sterne's first taking up his pen. For it was he that brought about a tremendous controversy in the cathedral society.

Dr Topham, in addition to his other offices, had obtained a patent place for himself, and, not content with this advantage, intrigued to have the reversion of it secured to this gay son. The Dean, in whose gift it was, seems to have resisted this pressure, and the result was a cathedral squabble, fought with all the weapons of verbal recrimination and pamphlets.

This little scandal broke out in the year

* Frederick Reynold's 'Memoirs.'

1758, but its origin dated much further back, to a promise said to have been given by Archbishop Herring to Dr Topham, whom Mr Sterne describes as a 'little, dirty, pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous fellow, who neither cared what he did or said of anyone, provided he could get a penny by it.' He united in his single person this wonderful combination of offices:—'Master of the Faculties,' 'Commissary to the Archbishop of York,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of York,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland,' 'Official to the Peculiar Jurisdiction of Howdenshire,' 'Official to the Precentor,' 'Official to the Chancellor of the Church of York,' and 'Official to several of the Prebendaries thereof.' Yet this rapacious civilian was not satisfied.

Dr Hutton had but just ascended the throne episcopal, when the pluralist, Dr Topham, began to be very assiduous in his attentions. 'He had run for eggs,' says Mr Sterne, telling the story satirically, 'in the town upon all occasions, whetted the knives at all hours, catched his horse, and rubbed him down; that for his wife, she

had been ready on all occasions to char for them, and neither he nor she, to best of his remembrance, ever took a farthing, or anything beyond a mug of ale.' *Trim* is the name Mr Sterne gives to this greedy petitioner—a name which seems to have pleased his fancy, as he afterwards confers it on a being of a very different mould, and the direct opposite of Dr Topham in all the unselfish virtues.* 'The Patent Place' was described under the figure of an old Watch-Coat, that had hung up many years in the church, 'and nothing would serve *Trim*, but that he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm under-petticoat* for his *wife*, and a *jerkin* for himself.' The Archbishop, who appears to have been an easy and compassionate man, wearied out by importunity, gave the promise required. Later on, however, he finds that he has been a little hasty, and that the Patent Place, or *Warm Watch-Coat*, was by the terms of its endowment to be strictly for the benefit of some one connected with the

* It will thus be seen that there was a Trim before the immortal Corporal. The name is also amongst Shadwell's *dramatis personæ*. [Mr Trim is a character in Shadwell's *Bury-Fair*.]

Cathedral: that is to say, 'to the sole use and behoof of the poor sextons, and their successors for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold nights.' Dr Hutton then finding he had promised more than was in his power, sends for Dean Fountayne, and in his presence explained to '*Trim*' how impossible it was for him to comply with his wishes. The pluralist lost his temper, 'huffed and bounced most terribly, swore he would get a warrant . . . but cooling of that, and fearing the Parson' (who is put for the Archbishop) 'might possibly bind him over to his good behaviour, and, for aught he knew, might send him to the House of Correction—he lets the Parson alone, and to revenge himself falls foul upon the Clerk,' *i.e.*, the Dean. This minor embroilment set on foot the clerical scandal, and the York society was delighted by an indecent wrangle between the Dean of their Cathedral and the Official of many Offices.

Dean Osbaldiston was the dignitary who had heaped 'many favours and civilities' upon Mr Sterne, which are acknowledged in the dedication to that Charity Sermon preached in the year 1747. But perversely

enough, unluckily in this very year of the dedication, the 'Very Reverend Richard Osbaldiston, D.D., Dean of York,' was translated away from York to a distant bishopric. To him succeeded Dr Fountayne, on whose side Mr Sterne was now doing battle. From this dignitary, the persevering Topham gave out that he had obtained a promise of a place, which bore the title of 'The Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington,' and whose value was five guineas per annum, and which Mr Sterne in his satire prefigures under the title of the 'Breeches.' The Dean publicly denied having made any such promise; and it was said that an unpleasant altercation took place at the public 'Sessions Dinner' between the two. Great scandal was the result; the Cathedral was divided; charges of falsehood and want of faith were exchanged, and both, appealing to a larger public, took the field with pamphlets.

Presently, a third quarrel broke out between the Dean and the Archbishop, which, as may be conceived, raised much more heat and dust. The affair was about some point of ecclesiastical discipline, which is hidden

away under the figure of raising or lowering the desk in the Cathedral. 'The Archbishop,' said Mr Sterne, 'might have his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *humility*,' and with this Prelate the disappointed Commissary took part. Fortified by such protection, he one day snapped his fingers at the Dean.

After this contemptuous rejection of the 'five guinea' emoluments of 'Pickering and Pocklington,' the Dean—in Mr Sterne's version of the case—asked if he would have any objection to let '*Mark Slender*' have the office: that is to say, Dr Braithwaite—who, it will be recollected, was one of Dr Burton's persecutors. An appeal was made to his pity. The breeches would scarcely fit *Trim*, 'who was now, by foul feeding and playing the good fellow at the Parson's, growing somewhat gross about the lower parts.' But the fact was, the pluralist expected better things; 'the great green pulpit cloth and old velvet cushion,' which would have 'made up the loss of the breeches seven-fold.' This was the 'Commissaryship of Dean of York, and Commissaryship of Dean and Chapter of York.'

The Cathedral seemed to abound in these curious little offices. '*Mark Slender*,' or Dr Braithwaite, did not live very long to enjoy the profits of his office; and then 'they got into the possession of *Lorry Slim*, an unlucky wight, by whom they are still worn—in truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this time.' There is no difficulty in identifying '*Lorry Slim*,' and this insignificant bit of preferment, which made such a hubbub, shows that he was of consideration with the higher powers, and a person of importance in the Cathedral battles.* This special quarrel, too, shows us a glimpse

* So far back as the 29th of December, 1750, Mr Sterne had been sworn in as 'Commissary of the Peculiar Court of Alne and Totteston' (an office of the same class as the one then in dispute), and appointed his surrogates. The duties appear to have been confined to the issuing of marriage licences, etc., and the emoluments were very insignificant. Thus, from the 18th of June, 1765, to the 25th of October, 1766, Mr Sterne received but £2, 1*s.* 4*d.* (His registrar, Mr Makley, has an entry in December, 'Paid Mr Sterne, thus far, £2, 1*s.* 4*d.*' And during seven months of the year in which Mr Sterne died, the returns reached but to 5*s.* 4*d.* Mr Sterne, however, made his annual 'Visitation of the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Parishes of Alne, Wigginton, and Skelton,' with great regularity. The following are the dates:—

10th June, 1751.	28th July, 1755.
6th July, 1752.	5th July, 1756.
28th May, 1753.	25th July, 1757.
1st July, 1754.	30th May, 1758.

After this year he became irregular, and left the duty to his surrogate. Mr Sutton, the Deputy Registrar, has the original book with these entries, which he has kindly allowed me to use.

of his character drawn by Yorick himself, and which may be added to the personal sketch given in *Tristram*. 'But Lorry has a light heart, and what recommends them to him is this, that thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will, still envies the possessor of them, and with all his pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*.' Still the unlucky Topham seems to have gotten upon a groove of ill-luck, for when the 'pulpit cloth' and 'cushion' were presently taken down, they were given away, not to him, but to one '*William Doe*,' that is, to Mr Stables, who understood very well what use to 'make of them.' It may be conceived what a soreness and ferment of parties this contention for places and disappointment brought about among the holy men of the Cathedral.

When it came to the 'Session's Dinner' squabble—which was at Mr Woodhouse's—and the pamphlets were fluttering in the air, Mr Sterne rushed to the assistance of his friend, Dean Fountayne, and, sitting down, wrote his first Shandean Essay. It is pleasantly done, and though somewhat ponderous in portions of the allegory, is in

his smartest manner; but some of the strokes are too personal.

No doubt this little petard was shown about as was the first portion of *Tristram*. It was about being printed when the Commissary grew alarmed. The dispute was accommodated, and the satire put by in Mr Sterne's desk.

The ferment is in itself not without its interest, a little photograph of the old cathedral life; but more significant still is it as a solution of the secret of that persecution of which Yorick bewailed himself as being the victim. If Mr Sterne suffered, that smart tongue and ready pen were in part accountable.

At this time he was unfortunately on the worst possible terms with his uncle. In the Warm Watch-Coat dispute the pluralist was, of course, on the side of Topham, who was his own official, and it might have been thought that his nephew's share may have led to the quarrel. It was, however, of older standing, and my uncle's 'wickedness'—as he called it—had been at work before 1751.

A SECOND LOVE — 'DEAR, DEAR KITTY'

CHAPTER VIII

A SECOND LOVE—'DEAR, DEAR KITTY'

IN this fashion the years glided away, until we touch the year 1759. And though this time has been marked by a certain stir and bustle, by local intrigue, and by public dangers and calamities, still Mr Sterne has hardly begun to live his life. Yet he is now just forty-six years old; and that famous 'homunculus,' Tristram, not thought of.

It was about this time that he was often met with at Scarborough, whose 'spaw' was then rising into repute—a place which all through his life he was fond of visiting. Young Mr Cradock—who was well known behind the scenes of private theatricals, and afterwards had his indifferent Epilogue attached to one of Goldsmith's famous comedies—recollected meeting him there. There was a well-known physician of the place—

Dr Noah Thomas—with whom Mr Cradock* used to dine; and at his table he met Mr Sterne, in such distinguished company as the Duke of York, the Marquis of Granby, Colonel Sloper, and Mr and Miss Cibber. Mr Sterne loved rolling his carriage along the beach, 'with one wheel in the sea.'

We shall now begin to see 'our hero in what must be considered his favourite and most effective character—that of lover, or perhaps philanderer. A notorious and successful philanderer he always was. 'Let me be wise and religious, but let me be man.' Here is his professional declaration. '*I myself must ever have some Dulcinea in my head.*' All this was as candid as it was true. Through his life he carefully nourished some gentle passion—it harmonised and allured the soul, and made him comfortable and happy. Philandering of this kind causes much distress, however, to the other party concerned, who feels acutely after the lover has 'cantered off on his haunches.' Unfortunately, in Mr Sterne's case, his 'amorous propensities,' as Johnson

* [Consult Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, I. 9, London, 1826.]

called them, were not found within such harmless limits. The Lothario had much to recommend him for this *rôle*—there was something attractive in his bearing and talk. His delicate frame, his odd but brilliant face and lively talk—wit and sentiment mingled—all commended him to the fair. There was safety, too, in his cloth.

With this preface we may draw up the curtain. And so 'softer visions, gentler vibrations,' shall now visit him; 'the lute, sweet instrument! of all others the most delicate—the most difficult! how wilt thou touch it, my dear Uncle Toby?' And yet how much more 'delicate' and 'difficult' to deal with here! which is yet a task most necessary in a life of Sterne, to be now attempted in all sincerity, and with candour.

At 'Mrs Joliff's, in Stonegate,' only a few streets from the mansion of Richard Sterne, was now residing a young French lady with her mother. They belonged to a Huguenot family, who had been forced to leave France on account of their religious opinions, and had found their way to York. Her name was Catherine de Fourmantelle,

and she seems to have been possessed of much personal attraction.*

The family itself was called 'Beranger de Fourmantelle,' and once held estates in St Domingo. An elder sister remained in France, having conformed to the established faith. Miss Fourmantelle and her mother came to York.

To Miss Fourmantelle Mr Sterne was now writing ardent letters, addressing them to 'Dear, dear Kitty,' which documents that lady put by faithfully, and cherished as Mrs Sterne had put by *her* treasures, by this time sad fossils enough. By-and-by they passed into the hands of 'Mrs Weston,' her friend, who indorsed upon them a little history of the conclusion of the adventure. Most of them are scarcely more than flying scraps, indited in Mr Sterne's chronic hurry. Many are without date, one with a wrong date, whose error is apparent from the context, and all are distinguished by some curious spelling.†

* The details of this little episode are derived from the curious letters printed by the Philobiblon Society, and edited by the late Mr Murray. [For these letters and Murray's preface, see Letters XXV.–XXXVII. in this edition.]

† It is an interesting question this of the spelling in the last century. Dr Johnson and other eminent personages, in their

Contemporaneously with this attachment —which, it may be presumed, like all Mr Sterne's *grandes passions*, 'was the tenderest ever human wight was smitten with'— Mr Sterne was busy with the first portion of famous 'TRISTRAM SHANDY;' and there can be no question but that by this accident 'Dear, dear Kitty' has received a certain immortality, from being niched into the eighteenth chapter, under the thin disguise of 'My dear, dear Jenny.' 'It is no more than a week from this very day— which is March 9, 1759—that my dear, dear Jenny—observing I looked a little grave, as she stood cheapening a silk of five-and-twenty shillings a yard—told the mercer she was sorry she had given him so much trouble, and immediately went and bought herself a yard-wide stuff of tenpence a yard.' Mr Sterne was perhaps rather over-fond of standing in shops, both in Paris and elsewhere, philosophising over the counter with young and pretty ladies.

He deprecates the construction which

letters, wrote easily, and it would seem to be that in letter-writing a certain licence was allowed. People seemed to write according to phonetic rules—words could be written in different ways without impeachment of spelling. In print only there was a fixed standard.

York gossip may put on the business: 'Nor is there anything unnatural or extravagant in the supposition that my dear Jenny may be my friend — friend! — my friend. Surely, madam, a friendship between the two sexes may subsist, and be supported without,' etc. Long after, when 'dear, dear Kitty' had been succeeded by a whole series of Dulcineas, he recurs to the name again, with a sort of fond recollection, and addresses to 'dear Jenny' a mournful meditation on death, then within a stride or two of him.

With this young lady Mr Sterne got through some of his heavy York hours, drinking dishes of tea, shopping, sketching, and sending presents of wine. 'Miss,' begins the first of these letters, written on a Sunday,* 'I shall be out of all humour with you, and besides *will not paint your picture in black, which best becomes you,*' unless 'a few bottles of Calcavalla' are accepted, which his man will 'leave at the *dore.*' He will explain the reasons of this 'trifling present' on Tuesday night, when

* Two or three of these letters had been seen and printed by the elder Disraeli. [Isaac Disraeli printed *five* of the letters in his essay on Sterne included in *Literary Miscellanies* (1840).]

'I shall insist upon it that you invent some plausible excuse to be at home.' This is signed, 'Yours, YORICK.'

After one Saturday night at 'Mrs Joliff's in Stonegate,' with Mrs Fourmantelle and her daughter, when they had stayed up very late, Mr Sterne writes the following Sunday morning to tell her that 'if this billet catches you in bed, you are a lazy, sleepy little slut,' and proposes to see her at a Mr Taylor's—the Mr Taylor that figured in the Blake embarrassments—at 'half an hour after twelve;' and he has ordered his man Matthew 'to steal her a quart of honey.' For the strain of rapture in which portions of the correspondence are couched, it would be unbecoming to offer a word of palliation. 'What is honey to the sweetness of thee who are sweeter than all the flowers it comes from?' 'I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you to eternity,' with more to the same effect. There is a curious expression in one of these letters which shows that he intended marrying the girl in case of his wife's death. 'I have *but one obstacle*, he wrote, 'to my happiness, and what that is you know as well as I.' Again he appeals to a higher

power—'God will open a dore, when we shall some time be much more together.' And again: 'I *pray* to God that you may so live and so love me as one day to share in my great good fortune.' Anyone who recklessly puts himself in so suspicious a situation—however pure his motives—cannot complain if posterity naturally judges him by the presumption of ordinary evidence. But for the feeling which could prompt him to calculate on the death of his wife, and already settle on her successor, nothing is to be said. Curious to say, long after he was making a similar arrangement with the more famous Eliza Draper.

On the Thursday following arrived the pot of honey and the pot of sweetmeats, with a dainty letter quite in keeping, and which reads as quaintly as though it came from an Elizabethan lover:—

'My Dear Kitty,—I have sent you a pot of sweetmeats and a pot of honey, neither of them half so sweet as yourself; but don't be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you; for if you do, I shall send you

a pot of pickles (by way of contrarys) to sweeten you up and bring you to yourself again. Whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours and according to your motto such a one, my dear Kitty—

'"*Qui ne changera pas que en mourant.*"

'L. S.'

'*Qui ne changera pas que en mourant!*' This from the Reverend Mr Yorick! Well may the cynic smile who has seen the long train of Mr Sterne's 'flames,' in respect of whom he was 'to change only in death.' 'My witty widow,' 'Lady P——,' 'Mrs H.,' 'Maria of Moulines,' 'Mrs Elizabeth Draper, wife of Daniel Draper, Esquire,' the 'Toulouse' lady, and the whole company of grisettes, which reads like the perfect *mille è tre* of Leporello's list; for all of whom he was 'to change only in death.'

Presently Mr Sterne is sending, not a 'pot of sweetmeats,' but a more serious gift, 'the enclosed sermon,' which proved to be his Good Friday charity sermon on Elijah, of which he had, do doubt, some

copies in his desk. He sends it because 'there is a beautiful character in it of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given by Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the prophet's.' He had the 'pleasure to drink your health last night, and, if possible, will see you this afternoon before I go to Mr Fothergill's' (Mr Fothergill was one of the ecclesiastical society—a prebendary, and a relation of the famous Dr Fothergill's). He is, in conclusion, her 'affectionate and faithful servant, LAURENCE STERNE.' From this more formal signature as well as from its more subdued tone, and the reference to the Elijah sermon, this letter would seem to belong to the earlier days of their acquaintance.

We must now lose sight of 'Dear, dear Kitty' for a short time; Mr Sterne being busy with far more important matters—in fact, laying the foundation for his fame. Miss Fourmantelle shall appear again presently, when Mr Sterne's letters to her become of far more value than mere rhapso-

dical effusions, being written from London in the first jubilee of his whirl of triumph.

What was the ultimate destiny of 'Dear, dear Kitty' is not known; but Mrs Weston, the friend before alluded to, actually took the trouble to indorse upon the bundle of letters a rather ghastly bit of romance—quite apocryphal—which is only worthy of notice for the purpose of showing what a curious confederacy there has been to vilify the memory of the great humorist in every possible way. This sets out that Mr Sterne had paid his addresses to her for five years, then suddenly deserted her and married Mrs Sterne. That by this cruelty she lost her wits, and was taken over to Paris by her eldest sister to be placed in a madhouse, in which gloomy place of confinement she died. Mr Sterne, however, during some of his pleasant visits to Paris, had contrived to see her; and with a practical eye utilised all the sentiment in the situation, working it up effectively in that well-known 'bit,' 'Maria of Moulines.'

A reference to a single date disposes of this clumsy 'sensation' scene. Mr Sterne was married in 1740; and we find Miss

Fourmantelle, in all her charms, intimate with him twenty years afterwards, viz., in 1760. No one has suffered so much from these fabrications as Mr Sterne. These were some of the weapons which Eugenius warned him 'Revenge and Slander, twin-ruffians,' were to level at his reputation.*

*This positive statement, however, as to Kitty's disastrous fate, though mixed with error, may be in the main true; and it may be that on being 'cast off' by her admirer—which it would seem she was, in the first flush of his success—she thus lost her wits.

'TRISTRAM' WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED

CHAPTER IX

'TRISTRAM' WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED

CONCURRENTLY with these pursuits —amatory and political—the parson of Sutton was busy with what he, no doubt, then considered pure trifling; but which was to bear him more fruit than infinite turns of the obscure wheel of Yorkshire politics. Busy with an ambitious attempt—a strange, rambling novel, based upon some of those quaint models with which his mind was stored; by which, too, his reputation as a satirist might be increased, and with the introduction of local allusions, and characters thinly veiled—he was, in short, scribbling away at *Tristram Shandy*.

It seems probable that the work was begun about the month of January, in the year 1759, and that the two first volumes of *Tristram* took about six months to write and print. He has himself let fall a hint

or two which helps us roughly to estimate his rate of progress.

Candide, Voltaire's famous romance, had appeared that year, and Mr Sterne had barely written a few chapters when he broke into an address to Fame, begging of her, 'if not too busy with Miss Cunegunde's affairs,' to look down upon *Tristram.** And at the seventy-seventh page of his first volume he makes a remark on the 'irregularity' of national temper; which he says was 'struck out' at the very moment he was holding the pen, viz., 'On this very rainy day, March 26, 1759, between nine and ten in the morning.' Some thirty pages further back he again marks the time at which he was writing—'This very day in which I am now writing this book for the edification of the world,' which is March 9, 1759 (a week after the time that 'dear, dear Jenny' and he stood 'cheapening a silk'). Going backwards in a rough fashion, according to this scale, January would be about the date he began his first chap-

* It is curious that three such famous books as *Rasselas*, *Candide* and *Tristram Shandy* should have appeared almost in the same month. [*Rasselas* and *Candide* appeared in March, 1759; and *Tristram Shandy* in the following December.]

ter. His fashion of scribbling must have been quite in character and truly Shandean. He owns to wearing a special fur cap, and had a fancy for a cane chair with nobs at the top. He usually wrote very fast, so that literally his pen guided him, not he his pen; and his way of writing was of that irregular, spasmodic, disorderly, and even uncleanly kind.

Even as he wrote he was suffering from his health, and that affection in his chest to which he was subject 'from the first hour I drew my breath in to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all.' A 'vile asthma' always tormented him; that periodic breaking of vessels in the lungs was always in ambuscade, as it were, for him. He had been tempted to try Bishop Berkeley's famous and fashionable recipe of tar-water. Mr Sterne had tried this nauseous remedy, and writes to a female correspondent of his, that 'it has been of infinite service.' He gave a York friend *Berkeley's Querist* and *Swift's Directions to Servants*, bound up together, and put in the beginning a humorous inscription:—'Laurence Sterne to... with B. Berkeley.... Going through a course

of tar-water for the pleasure committed of sitting up till three in the morning.' *

Word, too, had gone forth as to the special character of the work. As originally written, it was a mere local satire—levelled at well-known persons in York and Yorkshire. Possible he meant in this way to retaliate upon Yorick's persecutors. His enemies were not slack upon such an occasion, and it was well understood that he 'was busy writing an extraordinary book.' He even knew the parties by name who were working in the dark. 'I shall not,' he writes to Mrs Ferguson, 'pick out a jury amongst..... and, till you read my *Tristram*, do *not, like some* people, condemn it. Laugh, I am sure you will, at some passages.' And the 'witty widow's' laugh was to be, by-and-by, swelled into a mirthful chorus in which the whole kingdom joined.

It is curious that he should not have thought of dedicating his book to some powerful protector. Later on, however, when his London triumph came, and a new edition of *Tristram* was getting ready, he found reason to change his mind.

* This volume was in the possession of Mr Gray of York.

TRISTRAM WRITTEN

Mention has been made of the rumour that got abroad that the lively Mr Sterne was 'busy writing an extraordinary book,' which shows that Yorkshire and the town of York was watching his motions. It was of interest to them all to know that their witty Prebendary was at work on a comic novel, passages of which had no doubt been read to a few.

Yet if we may trust a curious letter from a friend of his, which stole into a magazine, these racy passages were written under circumstances of deep domestic trouble. Mrs Sterne was very ill at the time, having lost her senses by a stroke of palsy, and his daughter Lydia had caught a fever.

The first instalment—three* volumes—was finished before June, 1759; and was to be no exception to the destiny which has waited on the entrance of many famous works into the world. It was declined by the publishers. Nor was it surprising. In that month he wrote to Dodsley, offering him the new book for £50, about the sum he would have been glad to receive for the dedication. But the wary publisher declined the unknown work

* [*Two* volumes formed the first instalment.]

of an obscure Yorkshire Prebendary, saying, 'that £50 was too much to risk upon a single volume, which, if it happened not to sell, would be hard upon his brother.'

Mr Sterne acknowledged the justice of this objection in a tone studiously modest, which contrasts amusingly with his later style, and proposed an arrangement upon a new basis. 'You need not be told by me how much authors are inclined to over-rate their own productions. I hope I am an exception.' Then in the same retiring way he submits this arrangement: 'I propose therefore to print *a lean edition*, in two small volumes of the size of *Rasselas*, and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set on the remaining volume from the reception of the first.' If the 'lean edition' (how characteristic this description) should have 'the run our critics expect,' he proposed following up his success with an instalment every six months. 'If my book fails of success,' he goes on, 'the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this

trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr Hinxham sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop upon the usual terms in these cases.'

Further, he will have it printed at York, but 'printed so as to do no dishonour to you, who, I know, never choose to print a book *meanly*.' The publisher may then have objected that the satire was too local. For Mr Sterne, assures him, he had actually recast this book, cut away all provincial allusions, had made 'the satire general, notes are added where wanted, and the whole made more saleable, about 150 pages added; and, to conclude, a strong interest formed and forming in his behalf.' *

It is not known what terms he did eventually make; but it seems likely, from what he wrote to a nameless doctor in the first flush of success, that it was a sort of speculative arrangement, with which, he owns, he proposed 'laying the world under contribution.' His book will be read enough 'to answer my design of raising a tax upon the

* See this letter, which embodies the substance of Dodsley's, in Dr Dibdin's *Reminiscences*. [Letter XXII. in this edition.]

public;' which seems to hint that his pecuniary profit was to attend on the sale of the book.

A bookseller, living in Stonegate, close to where Miss Fourmantelle stopped, was to *exploiter* it in York: 'Mr John Hinxham, successor to the late Mr Hilyard.' And, at the end of December, in the year 1759, the famous romance of *Tristram Shandy* came out at York.

It took the shape of two miniature pocket volumes, prettily printed in new type, and on superior paper. It may after all have been printed in London, and by Dodsley's printer—for type, paper, and general shape resemble that of a certain *Enquiry* by one Dr Goldsmith, which was brought out that very year by the same publishers. Mr Sterne, too, showed his acquaintance with that odd class of eccentric little books, without name, date, or place of publication—the very foundlings of the republic of letters—when he sent forth *Tristram* under such conditions; for the first two volumes show nothing on the title but a 'colophon' and a date. The price was but five shillings for the two.

Those who took the *Publick Advertiser*, in

the great metropolis, read in their number of Tuesday, the first day of the year, a modest advertisement of the new book.

'*This* day,' it ran, 'is published, printed on superfine writing paper, and a new letter, in two volumes, price 5s., neatly bound, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. York.* Printed for and sold by John Hinxham (successor to the late Mr Hilyard), Bookseller in Stonegate; J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall; and Mr Cooper, in Paternoster-row, London; and by all the booksellers in Great Britain and Ireland.' This notice appeared once or twice.

It threw York into a perfect commotion. Everyone in the cathedral town rushed to buy. Within two days, the bookseller had disposed of two hundred copies, and the demand increasing. 'The nobility and great folks,' wrote Miss Fourmantelle, to London, 'stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good book.' Everybody, she said, was talking of the 'witty smart book;' nor did they find much to object to in the fact that it was 'a little tawdry in some places.'

On the last day of the year there was a concert at the York Assembly Rooms, at which were the 'nobility and great folks,'

and the brilliant Prebendary himself. There he met the young French *émigrée* lady, Miss Fourmantelle, and talked with her over the triumph of the new book, and told how he had sent up some copies to London. And the next day the young French lady sat down and wrote to an influential London friend a letter, whereof the text was the new book, pure and simple.

The London friend is entreated to get it and to read it, and, above all, to praise it *partout*, because his 'good word in town will do the author, I am sure, great service.' She owns that the 'graver people say, 'tis not fit for young ladies to read, so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young lady to recommend.' She then tells him it is by a person whose name is Sterne, and praises him as 'a gentleman of great perferment, and has a great character in these parts as a man of learning and wit.' She half apologises for this warm advocacy, by adding that 'he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger; and I could not think how I could make a better return

than by endeavouring to make you a friend to him and his performance. This is all my excuse for this liberty, which I hope you will excuse.' In short, a prettily-written lady's letter. Unluckily for this candid appeal, there was found among the young lady's papers a draft of this London letter, in the actual handwriting of 'the great character in those parts as a man of learning and wit!' The clever Mr Sterne had written for the young French lady what she was to send to her friend!

The book, however, was not to need such helps. It does not, indeed, seem certain that the 'run' began at once, or, indeed, until Mr Sterne himself came up to town in March; for it was not until April that notices of its enthusiastic reception, then rife, were dropped in letters from London to the country. The second edition, too, did not come out until the middle of the year.* A month's 'rush for copies' would exhaust a small edition in these days; and in the memoir, which appeared when Mr Sterne first came upon town, it is stated

* [When Sterne reached London, early in March, the first edition was already exhausted. The second edition appeared on April 3, 1760.]

that only a few copies were sent up to London at first, so little anticipation was there of anything like a serious demand at Mr Dodsley's establishment.

PETTY ANNOYANCES

CHAPTER X

PETTY ANNOYANCES

IN the month of November, before his book appeared, he had taken a house 'in the Minsteryard' for his wife and daughter, in order that the latter, being now some twelve years old, might have the advantage of such masters as York could afford. She was to begin dancing forthwith. Mr Sterne said if he could not give her a fortune, she should at least have a suitable education. Still, for all this hint at want of means, it is plain that he was in the habit of treating himself to visits to London, and had fixed an expedition for the March of the following year, as soon as the labour of publishing *Tristram* should have been off his hands.

It had been scarcely in the hands of the York lieges a month before the personalities, fancied or real, began to bear awkward fruit. He was worried by letters of expostulation,

and a tide of good advice flowed in upon him from well-meaning friends. The *genus irritabile* of '*our Sydenhams and Sangrados*' were specially sore. A strange passage in the first volume, which has mystified readers, was in that day perfectly intelligible, and resented. 'Did not Dr Kunastrokius,' he writes, 'that great man, at his leisure hours, take the greatest delight imaginable in combing of asses' tails, and plucking the dead hairs out with his teeth, though he had tweezers always in his pockets?' This, it seems, was pointed at the celebrated Dr Mead, whose intellects wandered a little at the close of his life, and whose malady took the shape of violent senile attachments. He was in the habit of sitting for hours together combing the back hair of his 'flames,' and picking out the short hairs with his teeth. 'This curious weakness,' says Mr Sterne in one of his letters, 'was known by every chambermaid and footman within the bills of mortality.'

There happened to be two country practitioners down in Mr Sterne's neighbourhood who had been married to daughters of the famous physician; and charitable fingers

speedily pointed out to them the passage in the new book reflecting on their relation. These gentlemen, however, were not too sensitive; and it was stated in the London papers that 'they were no champions for his foible, and could meet Yorick without reproaches or blushings.' But an indignant doctor, a personal friend of Mr Sterne, wrote promptly to protest against this outrage on the dead; for Dr Mead was already gathered to his fathers. He insisted in many letters on the maxim, *De mortuis*, etc., and even hinted at 'cowardice;' and to him the author wrote an indignant justification of many pages, half serious, and altogether Shandean.

This medical friend, who writes from London, good-naturedly lets his clerical friend in the provinces know 'the general opinion of the best judges, without exception,' upon his book, which is to the effect 'that it cannot be put into the hands of any woman of character;' a verdict perfectly just. Mr Sterne insists that this view is taken merely from the 'little world of your acquaintance,' which it most likely was. 'I hope,' adds Mr Sterne, 'you ex-

cept widows, doctor, for they are not all so squeamish; but I am told they are all really of my party, in return for some good offices done their interests in the 176th page of my second volume; . . . but for the chaste married, and chaste unmarried, they must not read my book. God take them under His protection in this fiery ordeal, and send us plenty of duennas to watch the workings of their humours till they have safely got through the whole work.' The London doctor, however, owned, a little grudgingly, that the book would be read enough 'to answer his design of raising a tax upon the public.' This was just at the commencement of the month of February; so that '*would* be read enough' was yet to come.

The picture of Dr Slop was at once appropriated by nearly every sensitive Sangrado in the district; the luckless author was waited on by injured members of the faculty, and called on with remonstrances, and even threats, to alter the personal strokes and colouring of his portrait. The 'ingenious Dr Burton,' at whom the wicked sketch was said to be aimed, boldly disclaimed

all consciousness of any resemblance in the picture. But there were others scarcely so politic. An amusing interview is said to have taken place between the author and one of the injured guild. The latter complained bitterly of 'the indecent liberties' that had been taken with his character and person.

'Are you,' asked Mr Sterne, very calmly, 'a man-midwife?' 'No,' the medical remonstrant was constrained to answer. 'Are you a Roman Catholic?' 'No.' 'Were you ever splashed and dirtied?' 'Yes,' answered the other eagerly; 'and that is the very thing you have taken advantage of to expose me.' * This was Shandean, and must have amused Yorick wonderfully. But he composed his face, and strove, with all gentleness, to reason his visitor out of the notion that any offence was intended. Finding, however, that this course had no effect, he is said to have dismissed the sensitive mediciner with this quiet caution:—

'Sir, I have not hurt you. But take

* Memoir in the *Royal Female Magazine* for 1760. [This is given entire among the anecdotes in the first volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

care; *I am not born yet*, and you cannot know what I may do in the next two volumes.'

He supplements it by a declaration, which we may also accept as sincere, as to 'the ends proposed in commencing author;' which were—'first, the hope of doing the world good by ridiculing what I thought deserving of it, or of disservice to sound learning;' and secondly, 'I wrote not to be *fed*, but to be *famous*.' Both ends were fortunately attained. His purse was handsomely lined in the same proportion as his fame extended.

A clerical friend also wrote to him nervously about the irregular character of the new book. Mr Fothergill, a brother functionary of the cathedral, preached daily to him on the same text. 'Get your preferment first,' said this clergyman, taking certainly not very high moral ground, '*and then write and welcome*.' All, however, pressed on him the necessity of a certain amount of castration, in case the book should run to a second edition. To these well-meant remonstrances he answered very patiently, promised some excisions—will 'use

all reasonable caution, but so as not to spoil my book; that is, the air and originality of it, which must resemble the author.' And another clergyman, 'a very able critic,' endorsed this view heartily, adding forcibly that 'that idea in his head would render the book not worth a groat.' He denied with reason that he had gone as far as Swift. 'He keeps a due distance from Rabelais, and I keep a due distance from him.' Still he was a good deal scared, and was inclined to give way. He tells his London medical friend that the propriety of alteration is even then (30th January) *sub judice*. He has even been driven to the project of getting his book put into the hands of his Archbishop, 'if he comes down this summer.' But, in truth, it was hard for him to know what to do; for were there not 'men of wit' and 'sound critics,' 'relishing' most the very passages for whose suppression the more moral were clamouring? No wonder that, harassed in this fashion, he should own to being barely above the level of despair.

There was one bit of consolation to cheer him. Even at this early date, before the

book had time to make its way fairly, the most skilful actor of the day had penetration enough to discern its great and eccentric merits. The famous manager and actor had read it, and was, no doubt, taken by its wonderfully dramatic character. Garrick's 'favourable opinion' was promptly transmitted to the author, though with a certain ungraciousness; the candid friend who reported it to Mr Sterne hinting that 'he had done better in finding fault with it than in commending it.'

For these injudicious but well-meant remonstrances, which certainly took a rough and churlish shape, the country parson was presently—sooner indeed than he or the remonstrants were dreaming of—to have satisfactory indemnity. *Tristram Shandy* was now in the hands of the great public of London—it being now close on the month of March, 1760—and he was packing his mails to go up to London.

Hitherto he had not lived for the world. Neither had the men and women of fashion, nor the world of metropolitan politics, nor indeed any of the great collected coteries, which confer degrees and make reputations,

bestowed a thought upon the obscure Yorkshire cleric. Now all is about to be changed. Now, as he said in one of his sermons, 'the whole drama is opened'—the splendid glories of success, and of London homage, are waiting for him.

VISIT TO LONDON

CHAPTER XI

VISIT TO LONDON

WHEN the now celebrated author arrived in town his success was already assured. 'No one,' writes Mr Forster, 'was so talked of in London this year, and no one so admired, as the tall, thin, hectic-looking Yorkshire Parson.' It may be questioned, indeed, if any author in England has since been socially so much the rage. 'East and west,' it was said, 'were moved alike.'

He arrived in the first week of March, and stayed for a day or two at rooms, whose locality is not known,* while he looked out for suitable apartments. 'The genteelest in town' meant to establish himself 'in Piccadilly or the Haymarket,' but settled himself before the day was over, in

*[Sterne went up to London with Stephen Croft, the Squire of Stillington. They lodged with their friend Mr Cholmley in Chapell Street.]

rooms 'one door from St Alban's Street, in ye Pell Mell.' Dodsley's, with the 'Tully's Head' over his door, was in the same street —number sixty-five—just opposite Marlborough House. It was a genteel quarter: and, three or four years later, another fashionable clergyman, the Rev. Dr Dodd, coming to London from an obscure suburban cure, also pitched his tent in Pall Mall.

It may be questioned if those rooms ever saw such a flood of fine company as then invaded them. He was not twenty-four hours in town before his triumph began. It was enough to have turned any ordinary mortal's head. He was already engaged to 'ten noblemen and men of fashion' for dinners, which shows that his coming must have been eagerly looked for. Mr Garrick was the first to take him by the hand, and overwhelmed him with favours and invitations. He had been the first, too, to discover the merits of *Tristram*. He asked him frequently to dine, introduced him to everybody, and promised 'numbers of great people' to carry the witty stranger to dine with them. He made him free of his theatre for the whole season, and undertook

'the management of the booksellers,' and to procure 'a great price.' No wonder, indeed, that when Mr Sterne was writing down to the country to his 'dear, dear Jenny'* an eager, agitated account of these honours, he should say that his friend 'leaves nothing undone that can do me either service or credit.' Neither was it extravagance of him to add, that he had the greatest honours and civilities paid him 'that were *ever known from the great.*'

Even in this bewilderment he was mindful of his 'dear, dear Jenny,' and after the exciting day, when he was alone in his 'genteel' rooms, at ten o'clock, sat down to write a hurried and joyful letter, rapturously detailing his triumphs. All the news went to 'Mrs Joliff's, in Stone Gate;' and from that source was, no doubt, filtered through York.

He tells her that he has arrived quite safe, all except that 'hole in my heart which you have made.' Unexpected success often imparts a general tenderness to the style; but it is hard to excuse the very warm tone of these raptures:—'And now,

* ["Jenny," here and below, is a slip for "Kitty."]

my dear, dear girl! let me assure you of the truest friendship for you that man ever bore towards a woman. Wherever I am my heart is warm towards you, and ever shall be till it is cold for ever.' There was in York another admirer who, it would appear, gave uneasiness to Mr Sterne; but to whom dear, dear Jenny had ordered herself to be denied, thus making Mr Sterne's heart inexpressibly 'easy,' and causing him to utter profuse and rapturous thanks. This person is darkly hinted at as 'you know who,' and curiously recalls another 'you know who,' who some years later disturbed an intimacy of Mr Sterne's with the famous Eliza. He assures his Kitty that it would have 'stabbed my soul to have thought such a fellow could have the liberty of coming near you.' He owns that he 'would give a guinea for a squeeze of your hand.' He does not conclude it until next day, when he is going to the oratorio:—'Adieu! dear and kind girl! and believe me ever your kind and most affectionate admirer. Adieu! Adieu!

'*P.S.*—My service to your mamma.'

Miss Fourmantelle was too busy to reply;

so a few days later he writes again, still in the same triumphant strain. Fashionable crowns are still being heaped on him. He has the same story to tell; his rooms are filling 'every hour' with 'your great people of the first rank, who strive who shall most honour me.' The following Monday he had fixed for a busy day, for returning the visits of all 'your great people' *en masse.* The current of dinners was still flowing steadily: Lord Chesterfield had asked him for that day; and Lord Rockingham, a young nobleman, who had the art of attaching friends nearly as strongly as Charles Fox, was to take him to Court the next Sunday. At the moment he was writing to 'my dear lass,' the room was full of visitors; still he made shift to snatch a moment to tell his 'dear, dear, dear Kitty'—on this occasion three times dear—that he was hers 'for ever and ever.'

But in that letter, too, was a very important piece of news, significant enough for the York gossip, yet far more significant for posterity. '*Even,*' he says, '*all the bishops have sent their compliments to me.*' Their compliments to the Parson-

author of *Tristram*. Such encouragement is sufficient to account for all poor Yorick's future vagaries. After the tumultuous acclaim of 'your great people of fashion,' it only wanted the episcopal 'compliments' to make him lose his head. The episcopal 'Benedicite' may be accountable for the seven succeeding volumes of *Tristram*.

Still there was to be a little drawback. There were some people in the metropolis who regarded the new-made reputation with envy. And one morning Mr Garrick dropped in with what he deemed a droll rumour that was going round the town. That 'proud priest,' Warburton, had been appointed to the See of Gloucester early in the year, and his fierce controversies and insolent epithets were in everybody's mouth. It had been given out that Mr Sterne was already laying down the lines for his new volumes; and it was maliciously insinuated, that when *Tristram* was old enough to need a tutor, a ridiculous caricature of the Bishop would be introduced.* It was improbable on the face of it. The sensible author of *Tristram*,

* [Consult 'The Design of Tristram Shandy' and 'The First Biography of Sterne' in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

though the idea appears to have been suggested to him, was not likely to make so false a step, or to turn what might be a powerful patron into a dangerous enemy.

Mr Garrick mentioned it lightly, but it annoyed Mr Sterne terribly. 'It was for all the world like a cut across my fingers with a sharp pen-knife.' But he assumed an air usual on such accidents, of less feeling than he had. 'I saw the blood,' he goes on, a little affectedly, 'gave it a suck, wrapt it up, and thought no more about it.'

He availed himself of his box at Drury Lane that night, where the great actor 'astonished' him; came home, and as in the case of all mercurial spirits, with the loneliness of the night, the little troubles of the day came back on him. Before going to bed, he sat down, and, at eleven o'clock, wrote to the actor a truly Shandean epistle —all dashes and short paragraphs.

'What the devil,' he goes on, comically; 'is there no one learned blockhead throughout the many schools of misapplied science in the Christian world to make a tutor of for my *Tristram?* Are we so run out of stock that there is no one lumber-headed,

muddle-headed, mortar-headed, pudding-headed chap among our Doctors, but I must disable my judgment by choosing a Warburton?' 'This report,' he adds, 'might draw blood of the author of *Tristram Shandy*, but could not harm such a man as the author of the Divine Legation, God bless him; though by-the-bye, and according to the natural course of descents, the blessing should come from him to me.'

Garrick was the friend of the Bishop, who was therefore likely to see some of these compliments. Warburton, too, had some experience of the 'lumber-headed,' 'mortar-headed' crew; and had been in many battles with the 'learned blockheads.' Mr Sterne turned this ugly rumour, which might have injured another man, into a stepping-stone for an acquaintance. 'Pray,' he writes, 'have you no interest, lateral or collateral to get me introduced to his lordship?'

'Why do you ask?'

'My dear sir, I have no claim to such an honour, but what *arises from the honour and respect which, in the progress of my work,*

will be shown the world I owe to so great a man.'

Garrick was a warm and steady friend. He did not lose a moment in writing to Warburton; and on the next day, which was Friday, March the seventh, received an answer from the Bishop—one of those manly, admirably-written epistles which that strange prelate could write, and which seem to have a meaning far deeper than what is expressed. It is valuable, too, as a hearty testimony of his sincere affection for Garrick, as well as of the high character of Mr Sterne, which had reached him by repute.

'My dear Sir,' it ran, 'you told me no news when you mentioned a circumstance of zeal for your friends: but you gave me much pleasure by it and the enclosed, to have an impertinent story confuted the first minute I heard it.' Mr Sterne's Shandean note had therefore been sent under cover, as perhaps he anticipated. He then goes on—'For I cannot but be pleased, I have no reason to change my opinion *of so agreeable and so original a writer* as Mr Sterne—*I mean of his moral* character, of which I had received from several of my acquaint-

ances *so very advantageous an account.* And I could not see how I could have held it, had the lying tale been true that he intended to injure one personally and entirely unknown to him. I own it would have grieved me, and so I believe it would him too (*when he had known me and my enemies a little better*), to have found himself in a company with a crew of the most egregious blockheads that ever abused the blessings of pen and ink.

'However, I pride myself in having warmly recommended *Tristram Shandy* to all the best company in town, except that of Arthur's. I was charged in a very grave assembly, as Doctor Newton can tell him, for a particular patroniser of the work, and how I acquitted myself of the imputation, the said Doctor can tell him. . . . If Mr Sterne will take me with all my infirmities I shall be glad of the honour of being well known to him; and he has the additional recommendation of being your friend.' He then signs himself with a warmth unusual in intimacies between bishops and players—'Your most affectionate and faithful humble servant, W. GLOUCESTER.'

Nothing can be happier than the way in which he puts the possibility of the rumour being true, and of its result in Mr Sterne's finding himself in company with 'a crew of the most egregious blockheads'—which conveys a delicate hint of Mr Sterne's possible hostility being even prejudicial to his own interests. What sincerity there was in the Bishop's patronage, as well as in Sterne's disclaimer, and what seems the true history of his 'Purse of Gold' story, will be shown a little later.

All this was crowded into that first week of Mr Sterne's arrival.

Someway that glorifying him by dinners at this period seems to have been always associated with his name. For it was recollected years after, and was even mentioned at a certain dinner at General Paoli's, in the year 1778, of which party was Dr Johnson, Dr Goldsmith, and Signor Martinelli. 'The man Sterne,' said Johnson, in his characteristic idiom, 'I have been told, has had engagements for three months.' This he gave in illustration of what is a truth now, as it was then (ushering it in, too, with his usual 'Nay, sir'), that any man who has a name,

or the power of pleasing, will be very generally invited in London.

These social ovations still go on, gathering as they go. From morning till night his lodgings are 'full of the greatest company. The dinner engagements still accumulate. For two days in succession he dined with Ladies of the Bedchamber. The next day Lord Rockingham invited him;—(Jaques Sterne, it will be remembered, had done this nobleman some election service). Then came Lord Edgecombe, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a bishop, and many more. This sort of homage was flattering, but something more substantial was now coming.

Within two days, two pieces of good fortune befell him. The first took the rather Eastern shape of a purse of gold; the second was a very fair slice of Church preferment. The incident of the purse of gold seems almost unaccountable.

The Bishop of Gloucester, as we have seen, had responded heartily to his advances; and he may have been the one 'bishop' who had entertained Mr Sterne at his table in Grosvenor Street. Warburton was pre-

pared to like him, and was delighted with *Tristram*. But it seems astonishing that his admiration should have taken the form of a purse of gold. Such largesse is surprising as coming from a man of his temper and character; and it seems no less curious that an eleemosynary offering of such a shape should be accepted by one in Mr Sterne's position. Whatever be the explanation, it must be taken as a token of boundless appreciation of Mr Sterne's merits. By-and-by the whole town came to hear of it, and extravagant stories and questionable motives were naturally enough imputed to both parties in the transaction.

The next day came the other piece of good fortune. Lord Falconberg, or Fauconberg, as it was spelt, was then at Court presently to be made a Lord of the Bedchamber at sixty years of age. There was a pleasant perpetual curacy down in Yorkshire, not twenty miles from Sutton, in his gift, which happily fell vacant about this time; and the very day after the shower of gold descended from the episcopal Jupiter, the living was offered to Mr Sterne. He did not lose a moment in writing the glad

tidings to 'dear Kitty,' whom the rush of honours had not quite driven out of his head. He wrote in a sort of transport, saying that now 'all the most part of my sorrows and tears are going to be wiped away.' This, it is to be presumed, was that local trouble or persecution so often before alluded to and aimed at in Yorick's Life. He then longs most impatiently to see 'my dear Kitty,' who was meditating a journey to London. He adds, that 'I have but one obstacle to my happiness now left, and what that is you know as well as I.' A significant declaration. What that obstacle is, the reader knows as well as Mr Sterne, or 'dear Kitty.'

How did Mr Sterne obtain this promotion? Writing to a titled lady friend of his, he seemed to take it as a matter of debt, saying he had 'done his lordship some service, and he has requited it.' But there is another tradition which has passed down from one curate of Coxwold to another, and is characteristic of Mr Sterne. When the news of the vacancy reached him, it was said that he at once waited on Lord Fauconberg, and reminded him of his old

promise to give him the living. The nobleman looked surprised at this claim, and was, in fact, utterly unconscious of having bound himself by any such engagement. Mr Sterne, however, persisted. When his visitor was gone, Lord Fauconberg is said to have thought the matter over seriously; and doubtful whether it would be advisable to support his memory at the risk of turning on himself the wit and malice of a Yorkshire neighbour, who, at that moment, had a suppressed pamphlet lying in his desk, and was considered one of the humorists of London, wisely changed his purpose, and wrote to Mr Sterne that he was to have the benefice.

It seems an improbable legend, for which there is no chapter nor verse, and with but the idlest of traditions for foundation. But what effectually disposes of the tradition is, that Lord Fauconberg afterwards used to persecute him with hospitalities—of which Mr Sterne was to complain whimsically to his friends. No one who had been intimidated into a favour would be so forgiving.

FAME AND HONOURS

CHAPTER XII

FAME AND HONOURS

BEFORE this wonderful month of March was out, every day of which seemed to bring a new triumph for our clerical hero, he had been looking forward to the arrival of 'dear, dear Kitty' in the metropolis. Within that short span scarcely any man had made such progress, and he was anxious she should have a nearer view of his dazzling apotheosis. She was expected in the first days of April, but wrote to say she could not come until the seventeenth or eighteenth, which made Mr Sterne sad, 'because it shortens the time I hoped to have stole in your company when you come.' He then adds with some sentiment and more indifferent spelling:—'These separations, my dear Kitty, however grievous to us both, must be for the present. God,' he adds, 'will open a *Dore* when we shall sometime be more together.'

He had been already thinking of setting out for Yorkshire, but could not resist staying for nearly five weeks more, in order to be present at a great pageant which was to come off in the second week in May. His patron, Lord Rockingham, and the victor of Minden, Prince Ferdinand, who was now in London receiving ovations, were to be installed Knights of the Garter down at Windsor; and Mr Sterne had been invited to go in the suite of Lord Rockingham. This distinction was too tempting to be resisted; so he had determined, nothing loth, as may be well conceived, to wait until the sixth. The flood of dinners had not even by that time spent its fury. He was actually keeping a sort of ledger in which his engagements were posted up. By the first of April he was bound for a fortnight in advance.

Many stories went round the town of his wit, his humour, and his repartees. It was told that the old Duke of Newcastle had said to him jocularly, 'that men of genius were not fit for work.' 'I think,' Yorick had replied, 'that the truth is, they are *above* work. My lord,' he went on, 'men

may put any load upon a jackass, but a spirited creature is too good for such labour.' *

By this time he knew the great Sir Joshua, and had sat to him. The result was a matchless portrait—a head, indeed, 'such as Reynolds might have painted, mild, pale, and penetrating;' exquisitely characteristic and unconventional, and almost the best that master had done. Even in the copies to be found in the cheaper editions of his books, it was impossible to obscure the animation, the quiet thoughtfulness, the hint of suppressed Shandeism, that pervades the face. The attitude so original and insignificant, is familiar to all; the sly, thoughtful head, leaning upon the hand, whose forefinger is so significantly pointed. Altogether a great portrait—one of the gems of Lansdowne House. When the King of Denmark, Walpole's 'puppet of an hour,' was being lionised in London, the artists got up an exhibition of their choicest works. It was held in Spring Gardens: and Mr Reynolds, choosing out four

* This, though taken from an old jest book—a very indifferent authority—has a certain characteristic air that looks like truth.

of his best pictures, placed this masterpiece — this 'singularly fine portrait' — as Northcote calls it, on the list.

This compliment was paid him at the wish of Lord Ossory, for whom the picture was painted. It later passed into possession of Lord Holland, after whose death it was purchased by Lord Lansdowne for five hundred guineas. It would now fetch many thousands.

Not yet have its delicate tones begun to fade, according to the fatal destiny which waits upon the Reynolds' works. It was already in the engraver's hands, and the result was to be a mezzotinto worthy of the painter, and one of the best of that matchless series which, at the end of the last century, came from the burins of M'Ardle, Smith, and many more. Well might Sterne write, that there was 'a fine print going to be done of me. So I shall make the most of myself and sell both inside and out.'

Something more substantial, however, than portraits or dinners might now naturally be expected. A brilliant prebendary with a host of friends, fashionable and political, might not unreasonably look for good pre-

ferment. That he had promises, and was confident of success, there can be no question. He hints it mysteriously to Miss Fourmantelle, talking to her of his hope that 'she would one day share in my great good fortune. *My fortunes will certainly be made;* but more of this when we meet.' There is here a tone of secret exultation, a secret confidence that his promotion was made secure; and with some discretion—in this age, too, when those who had the appointment of ecclesiastical offices were not too nice in their selection—it is likely enough that Yorick would have been a dignitary. But that 'lack of ballast,' and the riot of London pleasures, were betraying him into what were, indeed, 'follies of the head, not of the heart,' but still no less fatal to his advancement. Already were his indiscretions becoming the talk of the town, and his name and books were being spoken of in the public journals with irreverence and disrespect. The reaction was, in fact, setting in; and it must be admitted, he laid himself open to such remarks with a reckless perversion.

He was to be seen constantly at Rane-

lagh Gardens—a place, it need not be said, which the presence of a clergyman scarcely suited. And though its charms might give 'an expansion and gay sensation' to the mind of Doctor Johnson, which he never before experienced, such 'expansions' would be eminently perilous to the weaker moral sense of so flighty an ecclesiastic. To the Soho entertainments of the questionable Mrs Cornely's, he repaired later. He was to be seen at Drury Lane, where Garrick had given him a box, and there the fashionable amateur, Mr Cradock, was in the habit of meeting him behind the scenes. He knew the actors, and was on intimate terms with the actresses, perhaps with Kitty Clive, who acted with such sprightliness, and spelt so ill. For, some time after, she wrote one of her pert complaints to Mr Garrick, concerning the stoppage of her salary, saying, that 'your dislike to me is extraordinary as the reason you gave Mr Sterne for it;'—a reason which Mr Sterne must have imparted to Mrs Clive. This braving of the world was almost too bold; and the town — at that time case-hardened enough, and more relaxed in its moral tone than ever it was at any time

since Charles the Second's day—affected to be scandalised. We do not apologise for Sterne, but it is impossible not to consider those by whom the cry was raised; for the abandoned Sandwich was, about this time, the effete guardian of morals in the House, Warburton was the meek apostle of tolerance, and Wilkes the accredited guardian of liberty.

He made no pretence of playing the Pharisee, or keeping his movements secret, even from the Yorkshire gossips. 'I saw Mr Cholmondeley to-night at Ranelagh,' he wrote down to his friend Croft, in a letter full of news. As Miss Fourmantelle was starting for London, he acknowledges the receipt of a letter of hers, 'which gave me much pleasure with some pain,' just as he was going off to Ranelagh.

As to irregular 'gentlemen of the gown,' the town must have been tired of such scandals. There never was such licence among the shepherds of the flock; or such toleration in the flock for the shepherds. The example of the laity acted directly on the clergy, and that of the clergy reacted upon the laity. This joint influence bore with it an

accumulating scandal. There were parsons, like the Rev. Horne Tooke, who flaunted abroad in gold lace and sky-blue and scarlet, and who apologised to Wilkes for having suffered 'the infectious hand of a bishop to be waved over him—whose imposition, like the sop given to Judas, is only a signal for the devil to enter.' There were Duelling Parsons, like the Rev. Mr Bate, chaplain to a cavalry regiment, who 'went out' and was killed in fair duel; 'a most promising young man,' said the papers with commiseration. There were the clergymen known pleasantly as 'The Three Fighting Parsons'—Henley, Bate, and Churchill; and 'Bruising' clergymen—like the one mentioned in Mr Grose's *Olio*. And a few years later the story of the unfortunate Dodd was to be in everyone's mouth; as well as that of the infatuated Hackman. Mr Thackeray here found a subject for his most vigorous handling; and some pages in the *Four Georges* are devoted to a bitter sketch of the clerical manners of that day. It is a tremendous picture. On such an ecclesiastical background Sterne's follies cannot stand out in very strong relief. His must be a well-

trained, steady spirit who can resist the prevailing demoralisation of a whole profession, or, at least, not catch the low tone of his order. Not that we may accept a taste for moral reading and wholesome sentiment as a test of moral conduct and virtuous life; as this is well known to be a curious inconsistency in human character,* and seems to be the answer to the argument, which has been pressed, perhaps a little too far; namely, as to this age so heartily relishing the soft beauties of Goldsmith, and the amiable virtues of the Pastor of Wakefield. The same age, it is said, that produced *Tristram*, brought forth also *The Deserted Village*, and that perfect and entire chrysolite of romance — 'the story which we read both in youth and in age, and bless for so well reconciling us to human nature.' But there are other merits in Goldsmith's *Vicar* beside its sweet and pure tone, and a charm beyond that of mere pastoral innocence — there is a surpassing delicacy of touch, simplicity, warm geniality,

* Just as at the obscure places of entertainment known as 'penny gaffs,' where the audience is the worst and most suspicious class of human beings, the finest 'sentiments' are welcomed vociferously.

marvellous Dutch painting, and perfect faith and truth—qualities which every age, however corrupted, will, more or less, appreciate. And how, after all, was this exquisite little pastoral welcomed? As Mr Forster says, it only 'silently forced its way. . . The *St James' Chronicle* did not condescend to notice its appearance, and the *Monthly Review* confessed frankly that nothing was to be made of it.' No doubt it eventually gained ground and passed through many editions before its author's death.

Gross as Sterne was, he should not be judged too harshly. It was difficult for a careless, unsteady mind, such as his was—unaffected, too, by the least tinge of Puritanism—not to catch the free, *débonnaire* tone which he saw everywhere. This, so far, has reference to the manners of the time, and, as has been insisted on, is ground for indulgence in dealing with Mr Sterne's levities.

The truth is, a coarseness of speech and writing had long disfigured the conversation and practice of the men and women of the age, and readers of Fielding and Smollett will have discovered that a certain forcible

indelicacy of phrase and allusion had become almost habitual. It will be found from allusions in the public papers and magazines that girls were allowed to carry *Tristram* about in their pockets; and Mr Forster, in a curious chapter, has shown us how the pious Dr Doddridge did not scruple to read over the *Wife of Bath*, to young Miss Moore, and could laugh heartily at its humour. Johnson went so far as to say that the same author was a 'lady's book,' and Goldsmith, always on the side of morals and virtue, innocently included two gross pieces by the same hand in a sort of 'Speaker' which he compiled for a bookseller.

Meanwhile, the York heroine, Miss Fourmantelle, had not yet arrived in town. She had written to Mr Sterne to use his influence for some local matter, which would appear to have failed. It is scarcely a refinement to say that an almost perceptible change of tone can be discovered in his answer. The whirl of festivity, the universal adulation, or possibly some other 'Dulcinea,' whose presence in Mr Sterne's head was a perpetual necessity, had done its work. 'Never, my dear girl, be dejected; something

else will offer and turn out in another quarter. Thou mayst be assured, nothing in this world shall be wanting that I can *do with discretion.*' He then assured her that she will ever 'find him the same man of honour and truth.'

But in a few days 'dear, dear Kitty' arrived, and took up her residence at Mead's Court, St Anne, Soho, and her presence there, it is to be feared, was rather a little drag and hindrance upon the clergyman's lively motions. He saw her of one Sunday afternoon; then, about the middle of the week, writes a hurried line saying he could not spare an hour or half an hour 'if it would have saved my life,' and that 'every minute of this day and to-morrow is so pre-engaged that I am as much a prisoner as if I was in gaol.' He then lays out a possible meeting for Friday. Sunday until Friday! But a few weeks before he would 'have given a guinea for a squeeze' of her hand and was momentarily engaged in 'sending out my soul' to see what she was about, and wishing he could send his body with it. She was consoled with this comforting speech:—'I beg, dear girl, you will believe

I do not spend an hour where I wish, for I wish to be with you always: but fate orders my steps, God knows how, for the present. —Adieu! Adieu!'

This is our last glimpse of 'dear, dear Kitty.' The car of Mr Sterne swept by her. She drops out of view at this point. She was second in order of Mr Sterne's violent attachments. Poor 'dear, dear Kitty!'

Warburton, meanwhile, held to him firmly, nor was he likely to be daunted by public cries. Perhaps the opposition of the crowd roused his controversial spirit. He even went round the bench of bishops, and recommended the book heartily to their notice; what was more extraordinary, he recommended the author also, telling them 'he was the English Rabelais.' To be introduced in such a character would seem an odd proceeding, unless, indeed, as Horace Walpole wickedly insinuates, 'they had never heard of such a writer!' Again, it must be repeated, such encouragement does, indeed, take much of the blame from off the delinquent's shoulders, and looks very like an invitation to proceed with further instalments of his book.

There are some little trifles which show the

strength of his popularity. There was a new game of cards called Tristram Shandy introduced, in which 'the knave of hearts, if hearts are trumps, is supreme, and nothing can resist his power.' For epicures there was a new salad invented, and christened the 'Shandy Salad.' And, later on, at the Irish steeplechases, we find horses entered bearing the name of 'Tristram Shandy.'* These are but straws on the current; but they show how strong the current was. Gray wrote that 'one is invited to dinner where he dines, a fortnight beforehand,' so that there was actually a double competition for the new lion; first, to secure his presence *at* a dinner, which was difficult when he himself was engaged fourteen deep; and then to be invited to the house where he was engaged to dine. To sustain this popularity and hold his own among the wits, he must have had special gifts of liveliness and good conversation. There can be no question but that he imported a good deal of Shandyism into his conversation, which he afterwards almost matured into a system, so as to astound the French *noblesse*, and make them inquire—

* [There was also a dancing tune called "Tristram Shandy."]

but not in such doubtful French as '*Qui le diable est ce Chevalier Shandy?*' When in special vein he would phrase it, 'I Shandy it now more than ever.'

That his London conversation took the shape of a pleasant tone of burlesque and grotesque exaggeration, always amusing if skilfully handled, seems likely from a sort of photograph of one of these dinners which has been preserved. He was dining at a fashionable house, where a certain self-sufficient physician chanced to be of the party, and engrossed the whole conversation, giving it a medical turn, and discoursing profoundly of 'phrenitis,' and 'paraphrenitis,' to the annoyance of host and company. Mr Yorick, seeing the turn matters were taking, at once struck in, as it were, in the same key, and began to give an account of a recent malady from which he had suffered acutely. It was a cold, he said, which he had caught originally by *leaning on* a damp cushion—the various stages and aggravations of which he proceeded to detail gravely, and with a happy parodying of the cant terms the professional gentleman had been dealing. He related how 'after sneezing and snivel-

ling a fortnight, it fell upon my breast. How they blooded and blistered me!' But, somehow, he grew steadily worse, for 'I was *treated according to the exact rules of the college.* In short, it came eventually to *an adhesion*, and all was over with me.' In this desperate case an ingenious idea suggested itself. 'I bought a pole,' continued Yorick, with due gravity, 'and began leaping over the country.' Whenever he came to a ditch, he, by long practice, contrived to fall exactly *across the ridge of it upon the side* opposite to the adhesion. '*This tore* it off at once. Now I am as you see. Come, let us fill to the success of this system.' Thus pleasantly was extinguished the intrusive physician.

This story went round the clubs, and got into the papers. The host was given out to be 'the amiable Charles Stanhope,' and the physician, Dr Mounsey, and with these names it fluttered down to York. But this was a mistake, rather an invention of the notorious Dr Hill—'Bardana' Hill—who was the first to set the story afloat in his *Inspector.**

* [Consult "The First Biography of Sterne" and Letter XLIII.]

He had a grudge against Mounsey, whom he at once cast for the part of the pedant.

There was at this time a very gay prince of the royal family, Prince Edward, afterwards Duke of York. He delighted in balls, supper-parties, and music, and was to die in a few years in a foreign country, of over-dancing at a ball. In London he would get the nobility to give supper-parties, at which he would stay until three in the morning. To this royal votary of amusement was Mr Sterne now presented. Though comparatively a cheap distinction in London, it was of importance enough to be written down into Yorkshire. Mr Sterne saw him at private concerts, where the prince performed publicly on 'the bass viol.' This, it will be recollected, was also an accomplishment of the clergyman. With his usual good fortune, Mr Sterne made an impression, and 'received great notice' from him. He was even invited to sup with him. He must have known Foote at this time, whom he was to meet again later at Paris, for he knew Foote's friend, the odd Dr Kennedy, who frequented playhouses, professionally as it were, and had himself fetched out by hurried lacqueys, just as

Mr Sawyer had himself called out of church. In short, this London campaign was one of the most brilliant ever fought by a successful man of letters.

Some little trouble of a provoking sort was he now to know. There was at this time in London a certain notorious Dr Hill —a strange and versatile quack, whose name, eyes that glanced over the *London Chronicle* or *Evening Post* were sure to light on in a corner. The 'Elixir of Bardana,' and the 'Essence of Water-dock, in bottles, 3*s*. each, sealed and signed by the author,' had made his name quite as famous as that of more modern advertising charlatans. He had also rushed into print; had interchanged epigrams with Garrick; and had a savage wrangle with the Royal Society. He added to the ranks of the magazines, whose name was already legion; and directed the *Inspector* and *Royal Female Magazine*. 'For dulness,' said Warburton, bitterly, in allusion to this last, 'who often has as great a hand as the devil in deforming God's works of the creation, has made *them*, it seems, *male* and *female*.' And in the *Royal Female Magazine* for May the first, appeared a strange paper—a photograph

of the fashionable clergyman—outrageously personal, and laughably flattering, a curious yarn of truth and falsehood commingled. It was copied into the *London Chronicle* and the *London Magazine*, and tuned in this key. 'The subject,' it began, was both 'a favourite and fashionable one. Yorick is a gentleman, a clergyman, and a man of learning—singular in the highest degree, for he has an infinite share of wit and goodness.' He is stated to be 'a native of the field of war, and to add to the whimsicality, born in the barracks of Dublin.' When his book made its appearance, he disdained to practise any of 'those common arts' by which 'a book is pushed. A parcel is merely sent up from the country;' and it was 'scarce advertised.' 'They have made their author's way *to the tables of the first people in the kingdom*, and to the friendship of Mr Garrick. Fools,' it goes on to say, 'tremble at the allusions that may be made from the present volumes. Forty people have assumed to themselves the ridiculous titles in these volumes.'

It then dwells on the 'extreme candour and modesty of his temper.' 'A vain man

would be exalted at these attentions. He sees them in another light.' It then gives a couple of Yorick's remarks, which were then going round; how Mr Sterne used to say, pleasantly, that 'he was like a fashionable mistress, whom everybody courted because he happened to be the fashion. And again, this 'singular creature' said to a friend who paid him a compliment on his great benevolence,—'I am an odd fellow, and if you hear any good of me, doctor, don't believe it.'

More serious, however, was a fresh statement of that vulgar rumour, which had been to Mr Sterne 'for all the world like a cut across my finger with a sharp penknife, but which, in its present broader shape, must have affected his sensibility far more acutely. '*And it is scarce to be credited whose liberal purse has bought off the dread of a tutor's character* in those (volumes) which are to come.' This was the old club story revived.

It has been mentioned how triumphantly he wrote to 'dear Kitty,' that 'I had a purse of guineas given me yesterday by a bishop,' when he had been only two or

three weeks in town. So odd and exceptional a present, and coming from so sensitive a being as the new Bishop of Gloucester, would in itself be quite sufficient to cause such a rumour.

The whole town seems to have had the story. Walpole wrote of 'the purse of gold' to Florence; it was alluded to in newspaper paragraphs. The quack doctor's magazine travelled down to York, was read there greedily, and very speedily a good-natured report was going round their little *coteries*, that Mr Sterne himself had written or inspired the whole. This was quite characteristic. What specially affected them was a paragraph relating to a piece of local generosity on the part of the Vicar of Sutton—ushered in by some outrageous compliments. 'Everybody is eager to see the author, and when they see him, everybody loves the man. When Lord Falconberg gave him the new benefice he found that his predecessor had left behind him a wife and family in great distress. The generous Yorick presented her with £100 in hand, and promised a pension for her life.'

His friends, the Crofts, watchful in his

absence, wrote to him of the rumour, and of how the Yorkshire Mrs Candours were circulating that he had furnished all the details of that complacent sketch. He wrote back an indignant denial almost the instant he received it. No wonder he should marvel at the uncharitableness of the York people, who could 'suppose any man so gross a beast as to pen such a character of himself.' Such a tissue of wild stories only 'shows the absurdity of York credulity and nonsense.' The best refutation, however, was in the blunders and mistakes—'falsehoods' he calls them—in reference to that 'whimsicality' of his birth 'in the barracks of Dublin,' which event, as we have seen, occurred at Clonmel; and more particularly in reference to that showy act of generosity, the 'hundred pounds' and pension to the widow of his predecessor—a charity quite beyond the measure of Yorick's purse.

He takes up the story of the purse of gold, and says, that 'in this great town no one ever suspected it, for a thousand reasons,' and refutes it by three arguments: the improbability of his 'falling foul of Dr Warburton, my best friend,' by representing

him so weak a man, or for 'telling such a lie of him as his giving me a purse to buy off his tutorship for *Tristram;*' or lastly '*that I should be fool enough to own I had taken his purse for such a purpose.*'* The last was, perhaps, the weightiest argument of the three. Yet it seems a suspicious, or, at least, a mysterious transaction. And we have his own assurance to Kitty that a purse of guineas had been given him by a Bishop.

The reviewers had now begun to deal with the book. The Critical Reviewers recommended it to the public 'as a work of humour and ingenuity.' The Monthly Reviewers do not appear to have dealt with it at all,† and the *London Chronicle*, and other journals, noticed it with a disfavour or commendation, pretty impartially divided. It was not until much later that they opened on him without mercy, and turned all such fiercer sarcasm as their force could supply

* Most writers—even Mr Watson, in his *Life of Bishop Warburton*—have assumed that there is here a complete denial of the purse story; but Sterne merely denies the supposed motive for accepting the purse.

† [The *Monthly Review* was the first to notice the book. See the issue for December, 1759.]

upon the succeeding issues of *Shandy*. One of these hostile reviews was conducted by a certain doctor, who wrote novels, whom he christened Smelfungus. The sharpest shaft of all, because the wittiest, was to flutter out of the obscurity of Green Arbour Court; and the *Citizen of the World*, in the *Public Ledger*, was to enter his protest against this prodigious popularity. When this pleasantry was slyly directed against the mere tricks and eccentricities of Mr Sterne's manner, it was well founded; but such a lack of appreciation of his genuine gifts, his pathos, and his humour, of his gallery of original men and women, seems incomprehensible in one of Goldsmith's nature. The judgment passed some years later upon Sterne's social merit—'and a very dull fellow'—would seem to have been his settled opinion of his literary gifts also. 'The humour and wit,' says Mr Forster, 'ought surely to have been admitted; and if the wisdom, and charity of my Uncle Toby, a Mr Shandy, or a Corporal Trim, might anywhere have claimed frank and immediate recognition, it should have been in that series of essays which Beau Tibbs and the Man in Black have helped to make immortal.'

' "Bless me," says the Bookseller—in this light airy bit of trifling—to the Chinese traveller, "now you speak of an epic poem, you shall see an excellent farce. Here it is. Dip into it where you will, it will be found replete with true modern humour. Strokes, sir; it is filled with strokes of wit and satire in every line." "*Do you call these dashes of the pen, strokes?*" replied I; "*for I must confess I see no other.*" "And pray, sir," returned he, "what do you call them? . . Sir, a well-placed dash makes half the wit of our writers of modern humour. I bought last season a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha-ha's, and three good things." ' This was excellent fooling. But in a week or two the Chinese citizen comes back to the subject, and strikes heavily, and in all seriousness, at the Rev. Mr Sterne. It is almost the only instance in the gay and good-humoured letters where he seems to grow warm and heated in his onslaught. He inveighs with justice against the freedoms and improprieties which disfigured *Tristram*, but for which it was scarcely fair to pillory Mr Sterne singly; for it is

admitted that 'this manner of writing is perfectly adapted to the taste of gentlemen and ladies of fashion here.' He remarks how 'very difficult it is for a dunce to obtain the reputation of a wit;' yet, 'by the assistance of this freedom, this may be easily effected, and a licentious blockhead often passes for a fellow of smart parts and pretensions; every object in nature helps the jokes forward, without scarce any effort of the imagination.' A severe but just criticism, and admirably hitting off the secret of the worst portions of *Tristram.*

With more severity still he dwells on the toleration with which *Tristram* was received by the female portion of the community. He wonders at their so 'bravely throwing off their prejudices;' and not only 'applauding,' but, what was far more serious, actually introducing this free tone into their conversation. 'Yet so it is, the pretty innocents now carry those books openly in their hands which formerly were laid under the cushion.' They are even heard 'to lisp their double meanings with grace.' If this was indeed the tone of society, it is scarcely to be

believed that Mr Sterne's book was wholly accountable for it.

Goldsmith was at this time smarting under a neglect but little creditable to the age. His bitterness is scarcely surprising; and had the words that follow appeared in a more influential organ than the *Public Ledger*, they would have caused Mr Sterne much annoyance and vexation. 'However,' Goldsmith goes on: 'Though this figure is so much in fashion, though professors of it are so much caressed by the great, *those perfect judges of literary excellence;* yet, it is confessed to be only a revival of what was once fashionable here before.' He alludes to 'the gentle Tom Durfey, whose works were once the subject of polite—I mean very polite — conversation.' 'There are several very dull fellows, who, by a few mechanical helps, sometimes learn to become extremely brilliant and pleasing. . . . By imitating a cat, or a sow and pigs; by a loud laugh and a slap on the shoulder, *the most ignorant are furnished out* for conversation. But, as the writer finds it impossible to throw his winks, his shrugs, or his attitudes upon paper, he may borrow some assistance,

indeed, by printing his face at the title-page.' He then falls into a happy burlesque of Mr Sterne's manner:—'The reader must be treated with the most perfect familiarity; in one page the author is to make them a low bow, and in the next *to pull them by the nose.* . . . He must speak of himself, and his chapters, and his manner, and what he would be at, and his own importance, *and his mother's importance*, with the most unpitying prolixity, now and then testifying his contempt for all but himself—smiling, without a jest; and without wit, possessing vivacity.'

It was not often gentle 'Goldy' grew so warm, or, it must be said, so indiscriminating. Was it that, besides his own indifferent opinion of the book, he suspected its reputation had been made by that cheap process by which he believed reputations were at that time manufactured in England? 'A great man says at his table that such a book *is no bad thing.* Immediately this praise is carried off by five flatterers, to be dispersed at twelve coffee-houses, from whence it circulates, improving as it proceeds, through fifty-five houses, where

cheaper liquors are sold; from thence it is carried away by the honest tradesman to his own fireside.'

In Dublin, the new book enjoyed a vast popularity. It was at once reprinted by that notable publishing privateer, George Faulkner, who praised it up extravagantly. Mrs Sandford was turning over the books one day in his shop, and was near buying it, and bringing it down to Mrs Delany at Delville. 'We were on the brink of having it read among us,' says that pleasant lady, with a devout horror. 'D. D.' was 'not a little offended' with the author, but still, the report of the Delville *coterie* on the Irish run of the book is, that, 'it seems to divert more than it offends;' which is quite characteristic of the country. In Dublin there were actually cheap copies, on inferior paper, selling at sixpence—to the great injury of the regular pirates, who were aggrieved by this invasion of their *quasi* copyright, and protested loudly.

The Florentine legation, kept *au courant* with all that was new or fashionable in London life by regular advices from Arlington Street, learnt that in the next case of

books there was to be 'a fashionable thing, called *Tristram Shandy*.' But the real opinion of the witty letter-writer was sent to Sir D. Dalrymple, who, at Edinburgh, was almost as removed from town talk as Sir Horace Mann was at Florence. 'At present,' he writes, on the 4th of April, 'nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling *a very insipid and tedious performance;* whose *chief* merit,' he says, consists in 'going backwards.' It made him smile 'two or three times at the beginning,' but, by way of compensation, 'makes one yawn for two hours.' The characters are '*tolerably* well kept up,' but the 'wit is for ever *attempted and missed*.'

YORICK'S SERMONS

CHAPTER XIII

YORICK'S SERMONS

ALL this time, while being feasted and *fêted*, and 'hurried off his legs by going to great people,' he had contrived to snatch a few moments for serious business. A new edition of *Tristram* was being sent through the press—no very heavy labour, certainly—and on an April morning the readers of the *Public Advertiser* saw under their eyes that—

'THIS DAY is published, dedicated to the Right Hon. Mr Pitt, with a Frontispiece by Hogarth, in two volumes, price *5s.*, sewed, THE SECOND EDITION of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.*

'Speedily will be published the SERMONS of Mr Yorick.'

The new *Tristram* edition had thus two additional attractions—the dedication to Mr

Pitt, and the plate by Hogarth. The book, indeed, had already a buffooning sort of dedication, addressed to no one specially; but that was written at York. Up in London it was different; the successful author, the rising cleric, the friend of statesmen, and *protégé* of bishops, would be ill advised to neglect this mode of increasing his social capital. Wise in his generation, as he fancied, he selected for his dedicatee the great patriot minister — and he one day writes from Mr Dodsley's shop the following note, which the great commoner thought worthy of being put by among his papers—at least had not doomed to immediate destruction:—

'Friday,
'Mr Dodsley's,
'Pall Mall.'

(Publisher and author, it has been seen, were but a few doors from each other.)

'Sir,—Though I have no suspicion that the enclosed dedication can offend you, yet I thought it my duty to take some method of letting you see it, before I presumed to beg the honour of presenting it to you next

week with the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy.*

'I am, sir,

'Your most humble servant,

'LAW. STERNE.'

The dedication itself was conceived in a warm, admiring strain. He told the minister that the book 'was written in a bye-corner of the kingdom and in a retired, thatched house, where I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill-health and other evils of life by mirth.'

This second edition barely stayed the public appetite, for it was exhausted in little more than three weeks. Four editions were issued before the year was out.

To engage Hogarth's aid for the illustrations he wrote to Mr Berrenger, the Master of the Horse, Garrick's friend, this extraordinary reckless appeal:—

'You bid me tell you all my wants. What the Devil in Hell can a fellow want now? By the Father of the Sciences (you know his name) I would give both my ears (if I was not to lose my credit by it) for

no more than ten strokes of Howgarth's witty chisel, to clap at the Front of my next Edition of *Shandy*. The Vanity of a Pretty Girl in the Heyday of her Roses & Lilies is a fool to that of Author of my stamp. Oft did Swift sigh to Pope in these words: 'Orna me, unite something of yours to mine, to transmit us down together hand in hand to futurity.' The loosest sketch in Nature, of Trim's reading the sermon to my Father, &c., wd do the Business, and it wd mutually illustrate his System and mine. But, my dear Shandy, with what face I would hold out my lank Purse! I would shut my Eyes, & you should put in your hand and take out what you liked for it. Ignoramus! Fool! Blockhead! Symoniack! This Grace is not to be bought with money. Perish thee and thy Gold with thee! What shall we do? I have the worst face in the world to ask a favour with, & besides, I would not propose a disagreeable thing to one I so much admire for the whole world; but you can say anything—you are an impudent, honest Dog, & can'st set a face upon a bad matter; prithee sally out to Leicester fields, & when you have knock'd at the door (for you must

knock first) and art got in, begin thus: "Mr Hogarth, I have been with my friend Shandy this morning;" but go on yr own way, as I shall do mine. I esteem you, & am, my dear Mentor, Yrs most Shandascally,

'L. STERNE.'

The application was successful, and the new Shandys * were adorned with a couple of spirited plates by the painter.†

For the new edition of the volumes of sermons which were now to be published, it was reported that he received £650. It was so written by Walpole to his friends. This, however, is a mistake. The original agreement, dated May 19th, sold many years ago, with other papers of Dodsley's, set out that for the new editions of *Tristram*, and the two volumes of sermons, he was to receive £480; a sum, considering they were mere pocket volumes, widely printed, with dashes, breaks, and other typographical

* 'Shandy' is said to be a Yorkshire local word signifying 'crack-brained,' 'odd,' etc.

† [Hogarth furnished one plate — the frontispiece, 'Trim Reading the Sermon.' A second plate, 'The Moment my Father cried Pish!' first appeared as frontispiece to Volume III., in January, 1761.]

spasms, was handsome enough. To Garrick he appears to have been indebted for this arrangement, who all through seems to have proved a fast, active, and useful friend. Not too exaggerated was that public apostrophe with which he addressed him a few months later:—'My dear friend Garrick, whom I have so much cause to esteem and honour (why or wherefore 'tis no matter).'

May came round, and in the second week of that month was the splendid installation at Windsor, when Prince Ferdinand, and the Marquis of Rockingham, a Yorkshire nobleman, were to receive the Garter. The ceremony took place on Tuesday the 6th, and on the Monday they set out, the latter nobleman with a 'grand retinue.' Mr Sterne was part of his 'suit,' perhaps in the capacity of chaplain.

The *Sermons* were now being eagerly looked for. For the sermon which Corporal Trim had read and commented on so admirably, and had been preached before the 'judges of assize,' had struck the public fancy. 'The best thing in it,' wrote Walpole, 'is a sermon;' and there was a large class of the 'serious' who bought the 'hun-

dred very wise, learned, well-intended productions, that have no charms for me,' as Goldsmith put it. Dodsley was not one to let so good an opening pass by, and a selection from Mr Sterne's *Village Sermons* was at press with the second edition of *Tristram*. On Thursday, the 22d of May, there was in the *Public Advertiser* this singular notice: 'THIS DAY is published, in two volumes, price, sewed, 5*s*. (with a portrait of the *Editor*, engraved from a painting by Mr Reynolds), *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*, published by the Rev. Mr Sterne, Prebendary of York. Printed for J. Dodsley.' It will be remarked, what a Shandean jumble is here of Yorick and Sterne; and some have leant on him very severely for what they considered a trick unworthy his position as a clergyman. They were not introduced under the authorship of Tristram Shandy, but of Mr Yorick, an amiable clergyman, with whose sufferings and pathetic end all were familiar. The fact was, Mr Sterne was better known as 'Mr Yorick,' than as Mr Sterne, and it was really a pardonable device which deceived nobody. In a characteristic preface he remonstrates with

his public. He hopes 'the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him'—in putting this new title to his newer work. 'Lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title-page with the real name of the author. The first will serve the bookseller's purpose, and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it where no jest was meant;' and accordingly in the volume is to be found a separate fly-leaf, for the benefit of such tender consciences as were liable to be pricked. Then, pleasantly taking credit for their being hastily written, and carrying the marks of haste with them, as evidence of their coming 'more from the heart than the head,' he prays to God it may do the world the service he wishes, and winds up with a declaration that he rests 'with a heart much at ease upon the protection of the humane and candid, from whom I have received many favours, for which I beg leave to return them thanks—thanks.' 'The man's head,' said Walpole, in one of his charitable humours, 'indeed was a little turned before, but is now topsy-turvy with his success and fame.' But this

Sermon Preface could scarcely have come from a topsy-turvy head. Lady Cowper's testimony may be accepted as a specimen of the average public opinion. 'Pray read Yorick's *Sermons*,' wrote that lady to her friend Mrs Delany, 'though you would not read *Tristram Shandy;* I like them exceedingly, and I think he must be a good man.'

Very droll was the equivoque which Mr Sterne related long after in his *Journey*, in reference to this very title. Who was the bishop—one of the first of our own Church, for whose 'candour and paternal sentiments I have the highest veneration'—who said 'he could not bear to look into sermons wrote by the King of Denmark's jester?' 'Good, my lord,' said Mr Sterne, 'there are *two* Yoricks. The Yorick your Lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years ago—he flourished in Horwendillus' Court. The other Yorick is myself, *who have flourished, my Lord, in no Court.* He shook his head. "Good God!" said I, "you might as well compare Alexander the Great with Alexander the coppersmith, my lord." "It was all one," he replied.

Mr Sterne thought 'that if Alexander of Macedon could have translated his lordship, the Bishop would not have said so.' This is a specimen of his best sketching. We almost hear and see the Prelate shaking his head and repeating, '*It was all one.*'

The *Sermons* were introduced in the prettiest garb. 'Have you read his *Sermons*,' writes Gray, 'with his own comic figure at the head of them?' Scarcely 'comic,' but showing a store of thought and originality, much latent humour, and a profound Rabelais twinkle.* The poet was charmed with them. He thought they were 'in the style most proper for the pulpit, and show a strong imagination and a sensible heart.' Dr Johnson, who could not relish 'the man Sterne,' was not likely to give a good word to his sermons. Mr Craddock tells us how a lady asked the Doctor how he liked Yorick's *Sermons*. In his rough, blunt way, he answered her,—

* Though the publication was spread over some eight years, there was a uniformity observed in the shape of Mr Sterne's books seldom met with in other directions. A complete set of the original editions is rarely to be found, and for the *bouquinant* makes a very pretty find.

'I know nothing about them, madam!' * Later on, the subject was renewed, perhaps started by one whom he might have considered to be more competent to deal with them, and he then censured them with much severity. The lady, who had not forgotten his plain reply, sharply retorted,—'I understood, sir, you had not read them.' 'No, madam,' roared the sage, 'I *did* read them, but it was in a stage-coach; I should not even have deigned to have looked at them *had I been at large!*' This onslaught was due to the great critic's temper of mind, for there were many other works of inferior quality which he deigned to look at—even enjoy. He was delighted with Blair's correct but feeble sermons. To another lady, the 'vivacious' Miss Monckton, he was scarcely less civil, when the same topic was started. She was urging that some of Sterne's writings were very pathetic, a modified shape of approbation which could scarcely be disputed. Again Johnson broke out, and denied it. 'I am sure,' she said, 'they have affected me.' This left so happy an opening for a good

* [Consult 'Sterne and the Theatre' in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

retort that the huge sage began to smile and roll himself about before speaking. 'Why, that is because, dearest, you are a dunce;' which unparliamentary stroke he afterwards handsomely withdrew, saying, 'with equal truth and politeness,' 'Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.' Posterity has happily reversed many of these rough-and-ready verdicts.

The moralist someway never forgave 'the man Sterne.' In his own city of Lichfield, the old animosity to the *Sermons* turned up again. One 'Mr Wickens,' whose books he was turning over, showed him the obnoxious discourses. The sight of it was like a piece of scarlet cloth. 'Sir,' roared the Doctor, 'do you ever read any others?' 'Yes,' answered Mr Wickens, with a little spiritual vanity; 'I read Sherlock, and Tillotson, and Beveridge, and others.' 'Ay, sir,' broke out the other, in a rather imperfect metaphor, '*there* you drink the cup of salvation to the bottom; here you have merely the froth from the surface.' But still he could appreciate him: and he told a friend of Sterne's long after, that it required all his powers to neutralise the effects of the humourist's fascinat-

ing powers of conversation, upon their common friends, Garrick and Reynolds.

The correct but prolix author of *Clarissa* was much scandalised by the new book. 'You cannot imagine,' he wrote, 'I have looked into these books. *Execrable I cannot but call them.*' And then adds, what reads very comically for those who shrink back from the weary and protracted incidents of the excellent Sir Charles Grandison's life, 'that he has had only patience' to 'run through' a portion of the book. In that same letter he takes the trouble of copying out the sentiments of a young lady who has been shocked by the persual of *Tristram*, and who ventures on a remarkable literary prediction. 'But mark my prophecy,' said she, impressively, 'that by another season it will be *as much decried as it is now extolled.* It has not sufficient merit to prevent its sinking when no longer upheld by the breath of fashion.' There is a pendant for this forecasting in Dr Farmer's prophecy, who, a little later, requested his friend, 'B. N. Turner,' to mark his (Dr Farmer's) words, and remember that he had predicted, that 'in twenty years, the man who wished to

refer to *Tristram Shandy* would have to ask for it of an antiquary.' The person reporting this in the year 1818, adds, with complacent dulness, — '*This was truly prophetic!*'

At length this London carnival was to close, and after his three months' revel, Tristram must return to rustic life again, and go back to Yorkshire.

On Sunday, the eighteenth of May, he had the honour of preaching before the judges—the second time of his performing that function. He had already bought a pair of horses for the journey; and in less than a week after the appearance of his *Sermons*, was on his road home. A very different man, it is to be feared. It must have been a well-ballasted mind that could have stood such a probation. Such was scarcely Yorick's. The pettings of the great, the fellowship of fashionable men, the flatteries of the crowd, must have worked mischief; worse than all, he took home with him the approbation of his spiritual superiors. Happy for him if Garrick's remark had been only in part true: — 'He degenerated in London,' said the actor, wit-

tily, 'like an ill-transplanted shrub; the incense of the great spoiled his head, as their *ragouts* had done his stomach.'

The sad feature of the whole was that he found himself compelled to cater, as it were, for the grosser taste of the public. *Tristram Shandy* may be said to have two spells of reputation. One, during its first publication —the second in the estimation of posterity. There can be little doubt that its success with the readers of Sterne's day was owing to the novelty of its coarse suggestions, even to its broad and low expressions. Remarkable, too, is the far-fetched, laboured fashion in which such topics are sought and introduced. There are many pages filled with what is sheer nonsense, probably meant to fill up the pages somehow and anyhow. Further, the great characters had been merely introduced, and not elaborated, as they were to be later. We may conclude, therefore, that it was the piquant grossness that 'fetched' the town.

But there was, as I said, a second and fixed period of fame for him and his book, founded on the humours of the four or five leading characters—my Uncle Toby, Mr and

Mrs Shandy, Trim and Dr Slop—these outlines have become fixed in the public mind, like the incidents and characters in *Don Quixote*. These are so clear in their drawing, and have been so much referred to and quoted, that they have become known and familiar, even for those who have never seen or read the book. The coarseness of *Tristram* is now little cared for, and taken as a book, on the whole is thought but heavy reading by 'the general.'

Coxwould, the new curacy, was on the Thirsk high road, and about sixteen miles from York city; Stillington, his other charge, lay within six miles' ride, and Sutton was about four miles beyond Stillington. On the whole, the 'cure' of all three would not seem to have been a very laborious duty, especially as the 'souls' were not very abundant. Still he found it necessary to subsidise a curate for Sutton and Stillington, and confine himself wholly to the pastoral charge of Coxwould. 'A sweet retirement in comparison with Sutton,' he called it, not very long before his death, when reviewing the scenes of his many wanderings. Red tiles and red brick fur-

nished a warm air of colouring to the place; and it boasted but a single inn, which was the Ferry House, close to the river.

It was a long, low house, which was fitted at each end with two quaint heavy gables, and which rambled away round the corner into a great, tall brick shoulder and high, pyramidal chimney, that started from the ground like a buttress, whose function it indeed served, and then finished off behind with a low, sloping roof within a few feet of the ground. When he thought of that cheerful, red-tiled roof, rustic and old-fashioned, yet so suggestive of comfort, of the fringe of ivy which hung over the doorway, and of the diamond-pane windows of the pretty church, which faced his windows from the side of the road of the little village, and of Lord Fauconberg's pleasant park, close by, where he used to drive—no wonder that, at the close of his wild Bohemian career, that picture should come back upon him with a breath of pleasant memories. 'This Shandy Castle of mine,' he began to christen it within a few weeks of his arrival. It soon grew to be 'Shandy Hall;' and by the name of Shandy Hall it is known

to this day. Behind in the garden was my Uncle Toby's bowling green — where the mimic sieges of Namur and Dendermond were carried on with such unflagging regularity—and the arbour, where the author of Uncle Toby wrote of the summer evenings. Sometimes, when he is very low in spirits, it becomes what he quaintly calls 'a cuckoldy retreat.'

His parishioners, it would seem, were scanty enough: 'Unless for the few sheep left me to take care of,' he wrote later, 'in this wilderness, I might as well, nay better, be at Mecca.' But this might have been one of its *agrémens*. Another was the vicinity of Lord Fauconberg and his park, scarcely a mile away: and to visit that nobleman, he used very often to drive out in a new chaise, drawn by the London horses, while little 'Lyd' cantered along gaily by their side, on a pony purchased for her by her indulgent father. There he found Lord Belasyse, and Lady Anne, to whom his company was always welcome. Naturally enough then he would have enjoyed his new habitation. He had no trouble with Sutton and Stillington; a curate, as I have said—the

Reverend Mr Walker—took care of those parishes for him.

After his death the house—it was known as Shandy Hall—was suffered to go to ruin. It had passed, with the Old Manor House, to the Wombwell family—one of whom had married Lord Fauconberg's heiress. Sir George Wombwell, the later owner, has put it in thorough repair. Unluckily it has been thought good to divide it into labourers' cottages, but the regular outline of the place is preserved, and on the entrance gate is to be read:—'Here dwelt Laurence Sterne, for many years incumbent of Coxwold. Here he wrote *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Died in London in 1768, aged 55 years.' *

The duties of his stall, now so long suspended, required his presence at York: and for little more than a fortnight after his return, we find him dating letters from that city. His first letter is to his Episcopal patron Warburton, with a present of 'two sets' of his sermons. He did not know the Bishop's address, and therefore 'could think

* Not far away, at Amplefurth, is the St Laurence's Catholic College, which it was jocosely said bore this name in honour of its erratic neighbour.

of no better expedient than to order them into Mr Berrenger's hands;' then takes the opportunity of making a very earnest and grateful acknowledgment for past favours. 'The truest and humblest thanks I return to your Lordship for the generosity of your protection and advice to me; by making a good use of the one, I will hope to deserve the other. I wish your Lordship all the health and happiness in this world; for I am your Lordship's most obliged and most grateful servant, L. STERNE.'

He adds in a postscript that he is about 'sitting down to go on with *Tristram*, &c. The scribblers use me ill, but they have used my betters much worse, for which may God forgive them.' An adroit reference to the rough treatment his patron and himself experienced from 'the scribblers.'

Warburton and Garrick had been already in consultation over our 'heteroclite Parson.' The Bishop, perhaps, was a little uneasy, lest his indiscreet *protégé* should bring his hastily-bestowed patronage into discredit. Garrick was interested in his friend's welfare and reputation. The donor of the 'Purse of Gold' would naturally be the most suit-

able person to take up the ungrateful office of monitor; and the actor had sent to Prior Park, by the hands of Mr Berrenger, some 'hints' as to the erratic behaviour of 'our Parson.' The present of the sermons furnished an excellent opening, which the Bishop was not slow to seize.

In a week's time the Bishop replied. It was an admirable letter, written in the full weighty style to which that prelate, when he chose, could adapt himself. A letter, too, skilfully adapted to the strange spirit he was addressing, and which delicately insinuated advice, and even reproof, without the cold air of professional admonishment. 'Reverend sir,' it began, 'I have your favour of the 9th instant, and am glad to understand you are got safe home, and *employed again in your proper studies.*' An odd remark, considering that Mr Sterne had just told him that he 'was just sitting down to go on with *Tristram.*' 'You have it in your power,' he goes on, 'to make that which is an amusement to yourself and others, useful to both; at least *you should, above all things, beware of its becoming hurtful to either by any violations of decency and*

good manners; but I have already taken such repeated liberties of advising you on that head, that to say more were needless, or perhaps unacceptable.' This was plain speaking. He then touches on some discreditable panegyrics on the author of *Tristram*—'odes as they are called,' notoriously written by Hall Stevenson. 'Whoever was the author, he appears to be a monster of impiety and lewdness. Yet such is the malignity of the scribblers, some have given them to your friend Hall; and others, which is still more impossible, to yourself, though the first ode has the insolence to place you both in a mean and ridiculous light. But this might arise from a tale equally groundless and malignant, that you had shown them to your acquaintance in MS. before they were given to the publick. Nor was their being printed by Dodsley the likeliest means of discrediting the calumny.' He then alludes to the little biographical portrait in 'a *Female Magazine*' and asks, 'Pray, have you read it, or do you know the author?'

That he really scarcely cared to disguise what was his private conviction as to these matters, is plain from the conclusion of the

letter. 'But of all these things, I daresay Mr Garrick, whose prudence is equal to his honesty or his talents, has remonstrated to you with the freedom of a friend.' If these were mere untrue rumours, how should Mr Sterne merit any such expostulation? And finally, by an admirable panegyric of the actor, he skilfully points the moral, and indirectly hints to Mr Sterne a course of conduct which he might imitate with profit. 'He (Mr Garrick) knows the inconstancy of what is called the publick, towards all even the best-intentioned of those who contribute to its pleasure or amusement. He *(as every man of honour and discretion would)* has availed himself of the public favour to regulate the taste, and in his proper station to reform, the manners of the fashionable world; while by a well-judged economy, he has provided against the temptations of a mean *and servile dependence on the follies and vices of the great.* In a word, be assured there is no one more sincerely wishes your welfare and happiness than, reverend sir, W. G.'

Making allowance for a natural anxiety to save his own credit as a patron, by keeping his *protégé* steady, it must be said again,

that this is an admirable letter. It had been well for this turbulent prelate had he been always thus temperate.

The following day, from Prior Park, he sent a copy of his admonition, together with Sterne's letter, to Garrick. It explains clearly the meaning of his advice. 'I heard enough,' he wrote, 'of his conduct in town since I left it to make me think he would soon lose the fruits of all the advantage he had gained by a successful effort, and would disable me from appearing as his friend or well-wisher. Since he got back to York, I had the enclosed letter from him, which afforded me an opportunity I was not sorry for, to tell him my mind, and with all frankness . . . . If it have any effect, it will be well for him; if it have not, it will be at least well for me, in the satisfaction I shall receive in the attempt to do him service.'

On the 19th, Mr Sterne replied. There is a tone half-wounded, half-defiant, rather different from the humble, grateful cadences of the first. He protests he would willingly 'give no offence to mortal, by anything which I think can look like the least vio-

lation of either decency or good manners.' Still, at the same time, it is hard in a work of the riotous complexion of *Tristram* 'to mutilate everything in it, down to the prudish humour of every particular.' 'I will, however, do my best,' he goes on, '*though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too.*'

He then clears himself from any participation in 'the Odes, as they are called;' and there is no reason why we should not accept this explanation. They were sent to him in a cover anonymously, and after striking out some of the grosser portions, he showed them round to all his friends as 'a whimsical performance.' This would account for his receiving the credit of their authorship. Garrick, too, who was skilful at *vers de société*, had threatened him with an Ode; and he naturally concluded that this was his performance. True, it was in Hall Stevenson's hand, but their correspondence had been interrupted for nineteen years, and it was natural that he should have forgotten its character. But as soon as he discovered who it came from, he 'sent it back with his extreme concern a man

of such talents should give the world such scandal.'

He then speaks with genuine feeling of the cruel onslaughts which had been made on his character and his works. There is a soreness in his tone which, in spite of his vaunting declaration that he would 'laugh loud,' shows that he was deeply wounded.

'Of all the vile things wrote against me, that in the *Female Magazine* was the most *inimicitious*. These strokes in the dark, with the many kicks, cuffs, and bastinadoes I openly get on all sides of me are beginning to make me sick of this foolish humour of mine, of sallying forth into this wide and wicked world to redress wrongs. Otherwise I wish from my heart I had never set pen to paper, but continued hid in the quiet obscurity in which I had so long lived. I was quiet, for I was below envy, yet above want; and indeed so very far above it that the idea of it never once entered my head in writing, and as I am £200 a year further from the danger of it than I was then, I think it never will.' A year afterwards Mr Sterne was describing his temperament to a less reverend intimate—'I would else just

now lay down and die; and yet in half an hour's time I'll lay a guinea I shall be as merry as a monkey, and as mischievous too, ... so that this is but a *copy of the present train running* across my brain.' Fame and profit are not parted with so cheerfully, nor is the ruefulness of a moment of despondency to be accepted as a true choice. Even as he wrote the '*mischievousness*' and 'merriness' of the monkey were not far away, and there was surely balm in the recollection that 'the Bishop of Carlisle called yesterday.' This episcopal patronage of a 'heteroclite Parson' grows every instant more surprising.

A reply from Warburton, written apparently by the earliest return post, closes the correspondence. His explanation had somewhat warmed the Bishop into cordiality, who writes in the same happy mixture of advice, compliment, and even irony, which distinguished the first. It ran: 'It gives me real pleasure that you are resolved to do justice to your genius, and to borrow no aids to support it, but what are of the party of honour, virtue and religion. You say you will continue to laugh aloud. In

good time. But one who was no more than even a man of spirit would wish to laugh in good company where priests and virgins may be present. Notwithstanding all your wishes for your former obscurity which your present chagrined state excites, yet a wise man cannot but choose the sunshine before the shade; indeed, he would not wish to dwell in the malignant heat of the dog-days, not for the teasing and momentary annoyances of the numberless tribes of insects abroad, *but for the more fatal aspect of the superior bodies.*' A friendly and prophetic hint as to his ecclesiastical prospects of preferment, which it were well he had weighed in his 'sweet retirement' at Coxwould. 'I would recommend as a maxim to you what Bishop Sherlock formerly told me Dr Bentley remarked to him, that a man was never writ out of the reputation he had fairly won but by himself.' A wholesome truth and effort at remonstrance, which, however, is unlikely to have had any effect upon a character such as Sterne's was. The whole is creditable to Warburton, who displays a delicacy and moderation surprising to those

familiar with his usual rough free-lance mode of action, and the portraits done of him by Churchill.

TRISTRAM AT HIS DESK

CHAPTER XIV

TRISTRAM AT HIS DESK

FAIRLY established at Coxwould by July,* he was now at work on his new volumes. On that ninth of June, when he sent his sermons to Warburton, he was sitting down to make a beginning, and he got on rapidly with the work. But so acutely had he felt the rough handling of the critics, that before he had written two or three pages, his thoughts strayed back to his still raw wounds, and the cruel 'bastinadoes' inflicted by 'the scribblers.' He could not resist the temptation of showing his scars to the world, and dealing with them in Shandy fashion, possibly to deprecate further rough usage. But he had not yet learned that the happiest retort against such attacks was passiveness, or at least the affectation of indifference. 'Never poor jerkin,' he wrote, 'has been tickled off at such

* [June.]

a rate as it has been these last nine months together . . . . . pell-mell, helter-skelter, ding-dong, back stroke and fore stroke, side way and long way, have they been trimming it for me.' He then turns back to the severest of all the attacks, that in the *Monthly Review*, and addresses them with comic expostulation. 'You, Messrs the Monthly Reviewers, how could you cut and slash my jerkin as you did?'

A little further on—a few days later in time—he has still the same bogie before him, and makes an earnest protest against those pedants of criticism who are 'so hung round and befetished with all the bobs and trinkets of their craft, like a native of the Guinea coast; and then introduces that familiar figure of 'the stop-watch critic,' who has figured on a thousand platforms since. 'And what of this new book the whole world makes such a rout about?—O! 'tis out of all plumb, my Lord; quite an irregular thing. I had my rule and compasses in my pocket.—Excellent critic!' He then rambled off into a curious preface, placed, according to true Shandean eccentricity, about the middle of the third volume—

still apologetic—still appealing from 'the scribblers'—striving hard to prove, in a curious mixture of raillery, serious argument, and illustration, that wit and judgment are not antagonistic qualities. For 'the scribblers' had insinuated, that whatever might be his pretensions to the one, they effectually precluded his having any share of the other; and while sitting at his writing-table, with his 'fur cap' on, 'dashing and squirting' his ink about on his books and furniture, he casts his eye downwards upon his cane chair, fitted with 'two knobs.'

Even while he wrote, his health was sinking below its usual feeble condition. He talks of his 'weak nerves' and of that 'vile cough' of his, which visits him with more than ordinary severity just as he is closing his fourth volume, while his head 'aches dismally.' These were, no doubt, the wages of his London campaign. Nor had his thin, wasted figure gained strength or flesh by that round of dissipation of which he pleasantly reminds the reader, hinting the improbability of some state of things 'unless you were as *lean* a subject

as myself.' Still, he was furnished with 'that careless alacrity which, every day of my life, prompts me *to say and write a thousand things I should not*,' and which, in default of health, made him feel its want less acutely.

He was now working diligently. By the first day or so in August — in little more than three weeks — his third volume was finished, and he was stopping for breath at the threshold of Slawkenbergius's strange adventure. Among his London friends was a certain Mrs Fergusson, to whom he seems to have always written with what he calls 'the careless irregularity of an easy heart,' and in the gayest mood of his own natural Shandeism. All his letters to ladies have more or less of this free humour, plainly in imitation of Swift's familiar gossiping with Stella. He wrote to her as 'my witty widow' on the 8d of August, and has just risen from the last sheet of his book with brains 'as dry as squeez'd orange,' in which condition it is hard to think of writing to a lady of wit, except in 'the honest John Trot style of *yours of the 15th instant came safe to hand*,' etc. This 'vile plight I found

my genius in,' inclined him to defer writing until the next post, in the hope of getting 'some small recruit, at least of vivacity, if not wit, to set out with;' but on second thoughts 'a bad letter in season seemed preferable to a good one out of it,' and so 'this scrawl is the consequence, which, if you will burn the moment you get it, I promise to send you a fine set essay in the style of your female epistolizers, cut and trim'd at all points. *God defend me from such, who never yet knew what it was to say or write one premeditated word in my whole life.*' 'I deny it,' he goes on, 'I was not lost two days before I left town, I was lost all the time I was there, and never found till I got to this Shandy Castle of mine.' He has already laid out a fresh expedition to London when he means 'to sojourn among you, with more decorum, and will neither be lost nor found anywhere.'

It was to this very lady he had the year before confided the secret that he was busy with a novel, adding, 'Laugh I am sure you will at some passages.' To her he now reports progress of how far he had gone with the new volumes. He 'wished to God' he

was at her elbow, as he is longing to read them 'to some one who can taste and relish humour; this, by the way, *is a little impudent in me*, for I take for granted a thing which their high mightinesses, the world, have yet to determine; but I mean no such thing, I could wish only to have your opinion. Shall I in truth give you mine? I dare not, but I will, provided you keep it to yourself. Know, then, that I think there is more laughable humour, with equal degree of Cervantic satire, if not more, than in the last; but we are bad judges of the merit of our own children.'

He was now at work on the companion volume. Not all his taste for carnivals, and the general frivolities of society, seems ever to have interfered with settled habits of curious reading and industrious writing. No wonder that near the completion of his task he should exclaim humorously, 'What a rate I have gone on at curveting and frisking it away, two up and two down, without looking once behind, or even on one side of me. I'll take a good rattling gallop, but I'll not hurt the poorest jackass upon the road. So off I set, up one lane, down another, through

this turnpike, over that, as if the arch-jockey of jockeys had got behind me. . . . . He's flung—he's off—he's lost his seat—he's down—he'll break his neck—see if he has not galloped full amongst the scaffolding of the undertaking critics—he'll knock his brains out against some of their posts. . . . . Don't fear, said I, I'll not hurt the poorest jackass upon the king's highway.' He then thinks of Warburton, and the 'story of Tristram's pretended tutor,' and niches in an amende to his patron. '"But your horse throws dirt—see, you have splashed a bishop." "*I hope in God 'twas only Ernulphus,*" said I.'

In short, so diligently had he laboured, that by the first week in October such persons as took the *London Chronicle* read in their copy of October the 9th, a very cheering announcement for all Shandeans:—

'The public is desired to take notice, that the THIRD AND FOURTH VOLUMES of *Tristram Shandy*, by the author of the fi and second volumes, will be published about Christmas next. Printed for R. & J. Dodsley, in Pall Mall, where may be had:

'1. A New Edition of the first two volumes.

'2. The *Sermons* of Mr Yorick, published by the Rev. Mr Sterne, Prebendary of York.'

The caution as to the new volumes being from the pen of 'the author of the first and second,' may have been in consequence of an impudent counterfeit which had just appeared — a sham third volume, by one Carr, which for similarity of type, shape and everything but genius, had taken in a few readers and some buyers. It will be seen, too, that *Tristram* was travelling gaily through successive new editions; and that in spite of the 'day-tall critics,' and the 'trimming of his jacket' by the *Monthly Reviewers*. For these new volumes Dodsley gave no less a sum than three hundred and eighty pounds, a large sum considering the size of the volumes, and an excellent test of the book's popularity. It was, however, not to be paid until six months after it had gone to press.

But just now, down at his retirement, he was aspiring to the full-blown dignity of a

Doctor of Divinity. He had even written a 'clerum' as an exercise. But he wisely forebore. Perhaps he thought that the title-page of *Tristram Shandy*, by the Rev. Laurence Sterne, D.D., endorsed though it was by high ecclesiastical authority, might offend. He did not proceed further than his 'clerum.' It was about this date that he took his share in that droll pictorial partnership* which Dr Dibdin, the eminent virtuoso (librarian also to the noble family of Spencers, who were friends and patrons of Sterne's), heard of when he came to York city long after, upon his bibliographical tour. Once the Doctor came to York, and with his friend, Mr Atkinson, explored the quaint old city and its curiosities. Among other matters Mr Atkinson showed him an old oil painting, rather rudely executed, but characteristic enough, representing a mountebank doctor and his man, exhibiting on a platform in the open street. The Bearded Dulcamara shows the face of one 'Mr Brydges,' a jovial York citizen of Mr Sterne's set—and

* [The pictorial partnership must have been in pre-Shandian days; whereas the *clerum* is first mentioned by Sterne to John Hall Stevenson in a letter dated July 28, 1761.]

in the face of the Doctor's man, who wears a sort of clown's dress, are to be recognised the features of Mr Sterne. An exaggerated, but still a good likeness. The whole was a sort of pictorial *jeu d'esprit;* it is said that Mr Brydges sat to Mr Sterne for the figure of the quack doctor, while Mr Sterne sat to him for the clown. The father of Atkinson knew Mr Sterne, and had many curious stories about him, which, like so many other curious recollections, have, unhappily, faded out. A rough out-door sketch of Mr Sterne, however, escaped destruction, and the father remembered well and told his son of the long, shambling figure—ill-dressed and slovenly—roaming abstractedly through the narrow York streets, talking to itself, and attended by a little procession of jeering York boys.

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

CHAPTER XV

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

HE was now in town, and found London in a curious flutter and confusion. Every eye was on the palace and its new tenant. Everyone was following 'this charming young King,' as Walpole called him, and noting his grace and good nature, 'which breaks out on all occasions.' About ten days before Christmas Day, he arrived in town with his *Tristram* MSS. in his valise. The time is almost fixed by a fresh advertisement of the Dodsleys, dated December 19th, announcing that the new book would be out in the course of the next month—a notice likely to be given on the delivery of the MSS. to the printers; and by a letter of Mr Sterne's written on Christmas Day, the tone of which shows he had been in London about a week.

From the moment of his arrival, the old carnival set in. The flood of visitors and

reciprocal visitings, feasts, dinners, politics, with correcting of proofs, left him not an instant. His dinner list was, as usual, full, and by a little computation we can discover, that for somewhere about five weeks he never dined one day at home! and he was besides afraid 'that matters would *be worse* with him.' These dinner testimonials so long sustained without change or fickleness, must be accepted as the best testimonials to his wit and spirits and powers of conversation.

The new *Shandys* had been read in MSS. to Mr Croft at Stillington Hall, and were now shown about London to a selected few. The Crofts, however, had misgivings, and were naturally nervous about the curious adventure of Slawkenbergius—the secret significance of which could not be misunderstood—and Mr Croft wrote him a sort of friendly remonstrance. Mr Sterne acknowledged this friendly act very gratefully, but reassured his 'kind friends at Stillington,' because 'it shifts off the idea of what you fear to another point,' as the satire 'is levelled at those learned blockheads, who in all ages have wasted their time and learning upon points as foolish.'

In London, however, there were no such scruples. ''Tis thought here very good—'twill pass muster. I mean not with all. No, no! I shall be attacked and pelted either from cellars or garrets, write what I will; and beside, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds, who either do not, or will not, laugh. 'Tis enough if I divide the world—at least, I will rest contented with it.'

Mr Sterne shared in the general infatuation about the 'charming young King.' He wrote enthusiastically about him to his friends at Stillington—how he rose at six for business, rode out at eight 'to a minute, looked into everything himself, and was determined to stop the torrent of corruption and laziness.' He was very intimate with Lord Rockingham, and the witty, 'flashy' Charles Townshend, with Mr Charles Spencer, and other men of politics; and writes to his country friends with a political wisdom and mysteriousness very natural but highly amusing. '*How it will end we are all in the dark.*' The importance in this last sentence is almost comic.

Mr Sterne very wisely kept on good

terms with his present ecclesiastical superior, Archbishop Gilbert. Miss Gilbert was now in London, and to her he paid the delicate attention of lending some prints, which he bought for the Crofts. All through he seems to have been in favour with the bishop who ruled in his diocese. *Tristram*, meanwhile, was being hurried through the press. He wrote to his friends that it would be out on the twentieth of January: but it, in fact, did not appear until a week later. On the twenty-seventh, the third and fourth volumes were published.

This second Shandy instalment was received with a mixed chorus of cheers and hisses. His prediction about the attacks and 'peltings' from garret, came true exactly as he had foretold; but there was compensation in the handkerchiefs waving from drawing-room windows. One half of the town abused it with tremendous bitterness, the other extolled it as extravagantly. It has been said that its success was not so decided as that of the first volumes. But writes Mr Sterne, 'the best is, they abuse and buy it at such a rate that we are going on with a second edition as fast as possible.'

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

This was written in the first week of March, so the first edition had been exhausted in about a month.* This was a speedy sale, for not yet had set in the palmy day when an edition would be swept off in a week.

The garreteers soon began the storm of abuse. Mr Griffith's men led the attack, encouraged by that indiscreet confession of sensitiveness in his apostrophe to 'Messieurs of the *Monthly Review*.' They justified their previous attack in the coarse, brutal language which they were accustomed to lavish on Goldsmith and others. They spoke of *Tristram* as 'the wanton brat now owned by its reverend parent.' Other faults might be extenuated, but the crying sin of the new publication was dulness: 'Yes, indeed, Mr Tristram, you are dull, very dull!' and the special points of dulness selected, show at least a curious taste on the part of Mr Griffith's men. We are sick, they say, 'of my Uncle Toby's wound in his groin: we have had enough of his ravelines and breastworks: we can no longer bear *with Corporal Trim's insipidity*.' If the half of the town

* [The second edition appeared on May 21 — four months after the first edition.]

that abused the book reflected this just criticism, Mr Sterne might well console himself.

He was every day growing more and more the fashion. Mr John Spencer took him down with him to Wimbleton—that Mr John Spencer who was nephew to the Duke of Marlborough. Before the month was out, Mr Spencer was created Lord Viscount Spencer, and was to have the next *Shandy* instalment dedicated to him. Then Charles Townshend had told Mr Sterne, in confidence, that he was to be shortly made Secretary at War; so political interest was gathering fast. How was it that he could not put these friends to some profit? Now came Lady Northumberland's 'Grand Assembly,' for which Mr Sterne hurried up from Wimbleton. Lady Northumberland had been giving 'Grand Assemblies' all the season; which Horace Walpole has enrolled among his festivals of honour.

One of Mr Croft's sons, Stephen, was in the army; the other became a brother canon of Mr Sterne's in the Cathedral. With so powerful a friend in London, who was, besides, intimate with the Secretary at War, it seemed likely that something might

be done for the military son; and Mr Croft accordingly applied to Mr Sterne. Mr Sterne writes back in all the flurry and tumult of his London parties—'I will ask him; and depend, my most worthy friend, that you shall not be ignorant of what I learn from him. Believe me *ever*, *ever* yours, L. S.' A week or so afterwards, Mr Sterne met with an accident. He got a 'terrible fall,' which sprained his wrist and prevented his holding a pen. He had in the meantime been thinking over his friend's business, and having been asked to breakfast one morning by a Mr V., 'a kind of right-hand man to the Secretary,' he took care to sound him on the matter. The Secretary's secretary strongly discouraged the advisability of taking any step just then.

The old York enemies of Yorick were not idle all this time, and a malicious rumour was presently set afloat in that city to the effect that the fashionable Prebendary was 'forbid the Court.' An absurd tale on the face of it; this species of honourable banishment being confined to the court of the French King. Mr Sterne told the story to his friends, and it afforded them much amusement. As he himself put it, he was scarcely

of sufficient prominence to attract so much notice. As for those about him, he added with a certain pride, 'I have the honour either to stand so personally well known to them, or to be so well represented by those of the first rank, as to fear no accident of that kind.' But it has been the fate of his 'betters,' who have found that 'the way to fame, like that to Heaven, is through much tribulation; and till I have had the honour to be as much maltreated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble, for I have not filled up the measure of half their *persecutions.*'

Some comforting balm was this unexpected tribute to his popularity. Dr Dodd had entertained Peers and Countesses at the 'Magdalen,' and made effective appeals to their sensibilities and purses; and the committee of the last-named charity knew well how effective would be Mr Sterne's name, when they requested him to advocate their claims on one Sunday in the first week of May. The committee, at one of their meetings, directed a notice to be inserted in the daily papers, that the Reverend Mr Sterne was to preach for the Foundlings; and on

the Sunday following the chapel was filled by a large and fashionable congregation. This was on the 8d of May; and two days afterwards the treasurer reported to the committee, that 'the collection at the Anthem' amounted to the sum of £55, 9*s* 2*d*.'* It went round all the newspapers, though they did not know the precise amount, that 'a large collection' had been the result of Mr Sterne's appeal.

Early in July this second London Carnival ended, and Mr Sterne had to return again to Coxwould. Seven months' absence in the year from cathedral and parochial duties did not certainly show much clerical ardour, and supposed a tolerant and indulgent diocesan. But Mr Sterne seems now to have laid out the future programme of his life after this pattern: the early portion of the year to be spent in London, and the last to be spent at Coxwould, in racing through two *Shandy* volumes, meant to be his regular annual contribution, and to furnish him with the means of supporting his London campaign.

* From the Minutes of the Foundling Hospital. But a charity sermon for the Magdalens—a far more 'sensational' charity—brought over a thousand pounds!

'I shall write as long as I live,' he wrote to a lady; and all through his books are promises of this steady two-volume yield, unless, indeed, 'this vile cough kills me in the meantime.' It is to be feared, indeed, that 'the incense of the great,' and his craving for fashionable pleasures, had completely put all the serious duties of his profession out of his head.

A worse result still was, that it brought him back to his village in a state of restlessness and despondency, wholly unsuited to his office. Almost as soon as he arrived, he was pining to be back in London again. His friend Stevenson—with a little malice—had warned him, that his eyes would be turning back to the promised land. He just passed through York, and then sat down and wrote his friend a letter, pitched in the very lowest key of low spirits. Raw Yorkshire weather had set in, and 'a thin death-doing, pestiferous north-east wind' was blowing in a line direct from Crazy Castle turret 'full upon me.' ''Tis as cold and churlish just now as (if God had not pleased it to be so) it ought to have been in bleak December, and therefore I am glad you are

where you are, and where (I repeat it again) I wish I was also.' He should have broken the fall, he thinks, from London, alas! to country dulness, by walking about the streets of York for ten days 'before I entered on my rest. I have not managed my miseries,' he adds, 'like a wise man; and if God, for my consolation under them, had not poured forth the spirit of Shandyism into me, which will not suffer me to think for two moments upon any grave subjects, I would else just now lay down and die.' Then he speculates on the humour of his friend at Crazy Castle, who had also his humours and hypochondriacs. He may find this letter 'cursed stupid.' But that, 'my dear Hall, depends much upon the *quota hora* of your shabby clock. He presently breaks out—'Curse of poverty and absence from those we love; they are two great evils, which embitter all things; and yet, with the first I am not haunted much.' Something, perhaps, of Mr Dodsley's £650 remained over, though a good deal must have been swept away in the six months' campaign. 'O Lord! now are you going to Ranelagh to-night, and I am sitting sorrowful as the Prophet. When we

find we can by a shifting of places run away from ourselves, what think you of a jaunt there (to Mecca), before we finally pay a visit to the Vale of Jehoshaphat—as ill-fame as we have, I trust I shall one day or other see you face to face. So tell the two Colonels, if they love good company, to live righteously and soberly as you do—and then they will have no dangers without or within them—present my warmest wishes to them, and advise the eldest to prop up his spirits, and get a rich dowager before the conclusion of the peace—why will not the advice suit both? *Par nobile*, &c.'

The two colonels were of the hopeful guild of Crazy Castle. He then announces that the following morning he will sit down to the fifth *Shandy*. 'I care not a curse for the critics. I'll load my vehicle with what goods *He* sends me, and they may take 'em off my hands, or let them alone. I am very valorous—and it's in proportion as we retire from the world, and see it in its true dimensions, that we despise it—no bad rant! God above bless you. You know I am your affectionate cousin,

'L. STERNE.

'What few remain of the demoniacs greet. And write me a letter, if you are able, as foolish as this.'

Students of character will see in this reckless, profane screed, certain signs of a decay and demoralisation. When two loose men address each in this fashion, there is evidently a sympathetic reference to pleasures enjoyed in company. But there is another letter indited to this *frère debauché*, the date of which we can pretty nearly fix about this time; for in it he reminds his friend that he is past forty—or about forty-five—and it will be remembered they were students at Cambridge together. This precious letter* is in Latin, of a 'dog' kind, and very justly excited Mr Thackeray's scorn. It is necessary to give a few extracts, however disagreeable the task may be. 'I know not what is the matter with me,' he says, '*but I am more sick of my wife than ever*, and am possessed of a devil that drives me to the town, and you, too, are possessed with the same devil, which keeps you in the desert, to be tentatum ancillis tuis et perturbatum uxore tua—believe me, my Antony, this is not the way

* [For the complete text, see Letter L.]

to salvation either present or eternal, for you are beginning to think of your money, which, saith St Paul, is the root of all evil, and you have not sufficiently said in your heart that now is the time to lave myself and make myself happy and free, and do good to myself as Solomon exhorts us, who says that there is nothing better in this life than that a man should live jollily, eat and drink and enjoy good things, because such is his portion in this life.' Then he speaks of his own going up to town—not for fame or for to show himself off—'Nam diabolus iste qui me intravit non est diabolus vanus, aut consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus qui non vult sinere me esse solum . . . et sum mortaliter in amore et sum fatuus, etc.* I am obliged to omit the rest. This, it must be said, is a shocking letter, and becomes worse when we think of the peaceful pastoral enjoyments at Coxwould, which he was praising to more decent folk. The clergyman that could write such stuff as this, must at this time have become quite depraved.

* Yet this letter was printed by his own daughter, who, we must charitably hope, was ignorant of its meaning.

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

His wife, Mrs Sterne—lost sight of, forgotten, left behind in all the series of London expeditions; now possibly grown more patient, dowdy, and provincial than ever—had long dropped out of Mr Sterne's course. She would have been out of place up in London, among his fine friends. It was, in fact, the old, old story — incompatibility; without an effort on either side to aim at even an artificial compatibility, by which a sort of harmony is sometimes brought about. On his side, a taste for town life and pleasures, which made him look on London as his settled home, Coxwould as a banishment. On hers, an apparent apathy, not to say indifference, joined with a disagreeable candour, fatal to nuptial peace. We can almost hear her speaking: 'As to matrimony,' wrote Mr Sterne at this time, 'I should be a beast to rail at it, for my wife is easy, but the world is not; and had I stayed from her a second longer, it would have been a burning shame—*else she declares herself happier without me*—but not in anger is this declaration made, but in pure, sober good sense, built on sound experience. She hopes you will be able to strike a bargain for me before

this time twelvemonth, to lead a bear round Europe: *and from this hope from you, I verily* believe it is *that you are so high in her favour at present.*' That is, from the prospect of Mr Hall finding an opening for the removal of Mr Sterne for a year at least.

Yet within a month, when he had started afresh with his *Shandys*, and had got more reconciled to his country life, we can look in at Coxwould on a picture that seems as domestic as could well be desired; indeed, almost pastoral in its flavour. His pen was scampering over the page, his ideas were coming fast. He was charmed with his work. Some new features in Uncle Toby's character specially pleased him. '*'Tis* my hobby horse, and so much am I delighted with my Uncle Toby's imaginary character, that I am become an enthusiast.' A pardonable complacency, when we reflect that this portion of labour contained the exquisite story of Le Fever, a masterpiece of true feeling and dramatic power. He was sitting at his table in the centre, 'squirting his ink about.' 'My Lydia helps to copy for me, and *my wife knits and listens* as I read her chapters.' This

is a healthier tone; but still, it will be said, how could he set a child of thirteen or fourteen to copy *Tristram!* But the phrase is '*helps*' to copy; and it curiously happens that this fifth volume, upon which he was then at work, is about the most harmless of all the *Shandys*. Any young lady of the present time might 'help to copy it' without danger. But the truth is, as will be seen later, Mr Sterne was jealously tender of all that concerned his Lydia; and the fact is only noticed here, because it has been made one of the popular charges against him, that he was so incredibly corrupted as to put into his child's hands pages that made grown-up people blush.

She had inherited from him a weak chest, and had now suffered three winters continuously from a severe asthma. His own health had not mended. This hard writing, the stooping over his desk, together with the churlish Yorkshire winters, could not have fortified the 'fine spun fibres' of Yorick's chest, which were perpetually giving way. Preaching, too, was a duty he could not give up, and which the rector of three parishes would scarcely be permitted to forego.

It was always 'fatal' to him; and this year he did not suspend that arduous duty. Before Christmas he was 'very ill' indeed—had broken a fresh vessel in his lungs, which he set to the account of hard writing in the summer, 'together with preaching, which I have not strength for.' He seems to have been at Death's door, and began to think seriously, as soon as his two new volumes were off his desk and in the hands of the public, of trying a holiday in some new scene, which would be of profit to his health and spirits, and possibly to his purse. A project of 'leading a bear' across Europe —of taking a young gentleman of rank and property on the grand tour—seems to have been in his mind just now. It was rumoured that his friends, the Northumberlands, were looking out for 'a governor' for their son, and Horace Walpole had been asked to recommend a person for the office. But Mr Sterne, after all, was scarcely the person to be intrusted with the supervision of youth, and perhaps needed 'a governor' himself. Later, he himself sketched—and sketched most dramatically—the average type of the men of this class.

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

On Monday, December the 21st, came forth Mr Sterne's usual Christmas present, the fifth and sixth volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, 'price 4*s*. sewed,' but not from the hands of the Dodsleys. Becket and De Hondt were the new sponsors, and he was to have no other publishers up to his death. We do not know the reason of this change. But the new volumes were eagerly welcomed by the public, and here was their author, in company with them, up in London, once more set free. A delightful incident always in Mr Sterne's life; and wistfully looked for with that announcement in the public newspapers. For it brought vacation—holiday—life itself; and as the books appeared—so, too, as surely appeared Mr Sterne.

Warburton, down at Prior Park, had read them before the 27th of the month. Since his letters of advice, we have not heard of the stormy bishop. But one who could take his counsel so defiantly as did the 'heteroclite parson,' who could answer with that independent speech, 'Laugh I will, my Lord, and that as loud as I can,' was not likely to be acceptable to such a patron. Let any

one who wishes to know the pattern of man whom he favoured, turn over the letters of his *protégé*, Hurd, and see how far an abject servility may be carried. To him Warburton wrote his opinion of the new volumes.

'Sterne has published the fifth and sixth volumes of *Tristram*. As to the style and matter, they are about equal to the first and second; but whether they will restore his reputation with the publick is another question. *The fellow himself is, I fear, an irrevocable scoundrel.*'

We have, however, Warburton's testimony to their being at least equal in merit to the first two volumes. Walpole wrote flippantly, they were 'the dregs of nonsense;' this, too, when the 'Story of Le Fever' was being copied into every journal in the kingdom. There were few dry eyes as that marvel of true pathos was read. Noble ladies wrote to Mr Sterne, to tell him how it had affected them. The famous image of the accusing spirit was considered all but sublime by Garrick. These volumes, however, contained but too many of those little claptrap devices with which Mr Sterne had begun to help himself over chasms, where his

own natural humour had begun to flag. Worse than all, he had begun to accept typographical extravagances *as* real humour —for the whole is sprinkled over profusely with dashes, stars, imitations of fiddles tuning, wrong pageing (as though by a mistake of the binder) and a page utterly blank—a pendant for the black pages which marked Yorick's death. Thus we have an odd series of zigzag lines, like a meteorological registry, and gravely signed at the corners 'Inv. T. S.' or 'Sculp. T. S.' like a regular engraving. We have 'dashes' of every length from an inch long downwards. Still, take them all in all—dashes, flourishes, and the general miscellany of such conceits—we can scarcely wish them away. Artificial as they are, they go to make up the historical character of the book, and are so many scraps and patches on the harlequin's jacket. With many weak portions, and a good deal of what may be called *remplissage*, these new volumes contain some of his happiest scenes. The reception of the news of young Shandy's death—the dialogues between Mr and Mrs Shandy on putting Tristram into trousers—the story of Le Fever—the elaborations

of my Uncle Toby's military tactics, and the council of war between him and his lieutenant—are at least equal to Mr Sterne's best efforts, and should redeem many shortcomings.

In these volumes, too, was found another device to draw purchasers—the author's signature on the first page of each volume—a practice which he adhered to in each of the volumes that followed. This was not even original, as some reviewers gave out that 'it had been practised by a certain authoress well-known to the public.' But it was loudly advertised, and the public were bidden to take notice—'*** each book is signed by the author.' This must have entailed much drudgery on Mr Sterne, and could not have increased the sale materially. If we are to accept his own statement—one of those unnecessary, injudicious statements, to which the momentary candour of Shandeism prompted him—the sale of this instalment was rather a falling off. Later on, he indiscreetly told the readers of volumes seven and eight that he had several 'cartloads' of the two preceding volumes on hand.

He had inscribed these books to Lord,

Viscount Spencer,' and specially dedicates the story of Le Fever to Lady Spencer, for which he had no other motive 'which my heart has informed me of, but that the story is a humane one.' The books themselves, 'are the best my talents, with such bad health as I have, could produce,' and the whole is ushered in by some odd Latin mottoes—one from Horace, one from Erasmus, and the third from the decrees of a Council at Carthage.

MR STERNE GOES ABROAD

CHAPTER XVI

MR STERNE GOES ABROAD

BEARING in mind the conditions under which the new volumes had been written, it is wonderful they should have contained any freshness or buoyancy at all. That last winter's attack had well-nigh cut short Yorick's career, and all but stayed that stream of volumes which he hoped would run for forty years. He seems to have barely struggled through on this occasion, and as he familiarly tells his readers, when they next met again, 'Death himself knocked at my door.' He owned that he had a narrow escape, and it did indeed seem marvellous how that spent chest of his could rally from so many shocks. When he grew convalescent he could scarcely speak across the table to his friend Stevenson, and what he spoke of humorously as '"these two spider legs of mine" (holding one of them up to him)' were scarce able to support him.

These were serious warnings not to be treated lightly. He was himself a little frightened, and consulted his friend as to whether it would not be advisable to 'fly for my life.' Eugenius, if not Hall Stevenson, made his counsel more grateful by a compliment. '"Then, by Heaven," said Tristram, "I will lead him (Death) such a dance he little thinks of . . . . to the world's end, where, if he follows me, I pray God he may break his neck." "He runs more risk there," said Eugenius, "than *thou*."' No wonder the allusion 'brought blood into the cheek from whence it had been some months banished.' Mr Sterne seems to have hearkened to his friend's counsel, and began to get ready for his travels.

On all sides, the sick Shandean seems to have met with every kindness and consideration. The new archbishop, Dr Hay Drummond, at once excused him from all parochial work for a year, or even two years—if it should be necessary—'humanely,' Mr Sterne adds, speaking of this indulgence. But a yet more serious difficulty lay in the way. He was looking to the sunny south of France to restore his shattered chest, but

the two countries were at war—an insuperable obstacle to easy continental travelling. It was understood that peace was not very far off, and many English of quality had already got as far as Paris—the first division of their grand tour; and some were staying there for the season, affiliated to the societies of that brilliant capital. A little interest would smooth away all difficulties as to passports; and Mr Sterne, casting about for some powerful interest, thought of his *Tristram* dedication and the great Mr Pitt. The favour was one of no very special magnitude, but it was graciously accorded, with 'good breeding and good nature,' as he described it. The road was now open to him, and he might depart when he pleased.

His friends, knowing his careless, Shandean turn, must have thought him ill-suited to travelling alone in a strange country. And we may accept that little story as true, which he tells us of his friend Hall's taking him aside and asking him how he was situated as to funds. He had thought of a hurried trip down to Bath, possibly for the waters; but gave up the idea. He had hoped, also, to tempt his friend Stevenson

to join him. But the latter was getting his *Crazy Tales* ready for the press, and could not go.

Just as he was setting out upon looking over his finances, he found he was 'twenty pounds short,' and wrote plainly, and even bluntly, to Garrick, 'Will you lend me this sum? yours, L. S.' Garrick sent it at once. But three years after, when Garrick himself was travelling abroad, the actor got very disturbed about this sum, which he had not as yet been repaid; and wrote home nervously about it. 'I hope Becket has stood my friend about what he ought to have received from me some time ago. I had a draught upon him from Sterne, ever since he went abroad: pray hint this to him, but tell him not to be *ungentle with Sterne.*' Every glimpse we have of this artist seems to show him in the same amiable character —yet always tempered with a steady good sense and firmness.

The very outset of this journey is characteristic. He confides to us the story of his abrupt departure with a pleasant confidence, shifting it into the *Sentimental Journey.* 'I had left London,' he says, 'with so much

precipitation, that it never entered my mind that we were at war with France; and had reached Dover, and looked through my glass at the hills beyond Boulogne, before the idea presented itself, that there was no getting there without a passport. *Go but to the end of a street, I have a mortal aversion for returning back no wiser than I set out.*' So he got a young French count, whom he had known in London, to take him in his train as far as Calais. Mrs Sterne and his daughter were to join him later at Paris. Finally, all was arranged: and about Twelfth-day his chaise was at the door. '*Allons!*' said I, 'the post-boy gave a crack with his whip, off I went like a cannon, and at half-a-dozen bounds got to Dover.'

The regular mail-boats departed, from both sides, only twice in the week. But small vessels were to be hired at any time, when the wind served; the exclusive use of one being secured for about five guineas. He hurried down to Dover, as we have seen, 'at half-a-dozen bounds,' and 'never gave a peep into Rochester Church, or took notice of the dock at Chatham, or visited St Thomas at Canterbury, though they all

three lay in my way.' He was very ill on the passage, 'sick as a horse.' 'What a brain! Upside down—hey dey! The cells are broke loose into one another, and the blood, and the lymph, and the nervous juices, with the fix'd and volatile salts, are all jumbled into one mass.' A faithful description: for the 'Packets' were no more than open pilot or fishing boats, of small tonnage, and wretched interior accommodation, which, too, was to be enjoyed at exorbitant and extortionate charges.

Over the incidents of the old posting journeys from Calais up to Paris hangs a picturesque cloud. They are full of colour and good scenic effect. The elements are all gay and pleasant to think on; the long, straight roads, with the rude-paved causeway in the centre; the interminable files of trees; the old posting-houses, always welcome; the gay, quaint towns, of which there were but hurried glimpses; the canals; the snatches of fortification; the women peasants, in white caps and sabots, along the market road; the men peasants, in woollen liberty caps, blouses, and sabots also; the douaniers, and the gendarmes, who suggest the drama of 'Robert

Macaire.' We may put in, too, the huge vehicle itself, built up with mountains of luggage, reeling and swaying; a huge, rickety, shabby, yellow argosy, all over dried dirty mud splashes, which toils up tremendous hills behind its string of horses, and leaves the music of bells behind. Wonderful, too, are the Normandy horses, round, dappled, shining, sprinkled with chocolate, snowy white, pink-nosed, long-tailed, kicking, lunging recklessly, shrieking, and biting each other's flanks; flinging their hind legs over the ropes; in frosty weather crashing down upon the ice in a living heap, only to be scourged again to their feet by the terribly sacrilegious being who sits aloft, holding the reins and discharging imprecations. Picturesque the postilions and estafettes, with the glazed, shining hats, the gay, embroidered jackets, and the huge boots, like a species of leathern tub. Picturesque the motley company of the *rotonde*, the *coupé*, the *intérieur*, and the more humble accommodation of the roof; the priests, soldiers, laymen, and *commis-voyageurs*, who were lifted up and set down at many stages. Picturesque the changing of the Normandy

horses; the halting by night at the Barriere, when the lanterns flashed upon sleepy faces inside, and gruff gendarme voices demanded passports. But, side by side with the picturesqueness, rises the memory of grievous and most painful discomfort of weary nights, acute suffering from the rude stone blocks over which the heavy machine was dragged, and actual torture from the cramped position of the limbs; uneasy snatches of sleep, procured by the agency of the strap that hung from the roof, and on which the sufferer, leaning his elbow, sought a temporary relief and a disturbed dream.

The whole economy of this 'service' remained curiously unchanged up to the days when the Chemin de Fer du Nord was opened. At this very day we turn into the old-fashioned inn yard, in the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires, and see lying up there in ordinary, the yellow wrecks of these ancient conveyances, in shape and pattern such as we see them in the prints.

No one was so fitted as Mr Sterne to relish these new associations. He had a perfect instinct for all things French; both in tone, colour and feeling. His account of

his French travels has a marvellous French flavour; is racy of the air, and colour, and fragrance of French dress and manners and thought. The change from the rough, practical Yorkshire life must have been inexpressibly welcome. His sketches of the old towns are dashed in as oddly and as quaintly as are their projecting gables and twisted streets.

He entered Calais when it was 'dusky in the evening,' and left it betimes in the morning, when it was 'dark as pitch,' so he could see but little of that postern of France. Later, however, he was to come with his Shandean brush, and sketch it in. Still, he gives it an amusing descriptive chapter, founded on 'the little my barber told me of it as he was whetting his razor.' His Calais chapter, put together in the true guide-book fashion, is a very pleasant satire on the crowd of travellers who 'wrote and gallop'd,' or who even 'wrote galloping,' and deluged the British public with inventories of all they saw. It is amusing to see how accurately he has copied M. de la Force's book,* with its meagre guide-book

* [*Nouveau Voyage en France, avec un Itinéraire et des Cartes* (2 vols. Paris, 1724, and often reprinted), by Piganiol de la Force.]

tales about Eustache de St Pierre, and the number of inhabitants and convents, and the exact measurement of the 'great square,' which, 'strictly speaking, to be sure it is not, because 'tis forty feet longer from east to west, than from north to south;' and how he even leads off with the same antiquarian flourish of 'CALAIS, *Calitium Calusium*,' where, however, with his common inaccuracy in spelling, he has put Calusium for *Calesium*.

He got a chaise, and began to post with all speed to Boulogne. He got to that gay, motley town early on the morning of his first day in France, and saw from the windows of his chaise the odd and doubtful miscellany of his own countrymen, who found it a happy refuge. The sun was rising and glistening on the bright colours of the town as he clattered by, and he marked the speculative glances directed at the new arrival.

These are not many strokes, yet the whole is a picture; and there is a breath and fragrance which commends itself to one who will turn back and think of his own first bright morning in France.

He was gone presently, with fresh horses.

'"Get on, my lad," said I, briskly, but in the most harmonious tone imaginable, for I jingled a four-and-twenty sous piece against the glass, taking care to hold the flat side of it towards him as he looked back; the dog grinned intelligence from his right ear to his left.' And so they clattered into Montreuil—famous Montreuil of a 'Sentimental Journey'—than which no town in all France 'looks better on the map.'

By his *Book of French Post Roads*, page 86, he journeyed '*de Montreuil à Nampont, poste et demi; de Nampont à Bernay, poste; de Bernay à Nouvion, poste; de Nouvion à* ABBEVILLE, *poste.*'

At Nampont was the well-known picture of the dead donkey*;—to become famous later; but Abbeville disgusted him by its wretched inn. At Abbeville, too, he entertained that dismal meditation on the manner of his death, which he would prefer 'at some decent inn,' where 'the few cold offices I wanted would be purchased with a few

* I recall the amiable naturalist, Charles Waterton, discoursing by the hour on Sterne, and he used to expatiate on the scene of the 'dead ass,' declaring that he could write an essay on it, and that from a naturalist's point of view it was perfect. He however declared that the notion was copied from Sancho's ass.

guineas,' and not at his own home, among his family; a wish, it will be seen, but too faithfully fulfilled. All along his journey he indeed took with him such dismal broodings, over the 'long-striding scoundrel of a scare sinner,' whom he was flying from. Disgusted with his Abbeville inn, he was gone at four in the morning. And 'with the thill horse trotting, and a sort of up-and-down of the other, we danced it along to *Ailly au Clochers*, famed in days of yore for the finest chimes in the world (Mr Sterne's own words have a chime of their own—and we seem to hear the rattling of the harness and the jingling of the bells)... and so making all possible speed from—

> *Ailly au Clochers*, I got to *Hixcourt;*
> from *Hixcourt* I got to *Pequignay*, and
> from *Pequignay* I got to *Amiens.*'

But at night, when the weary traveller was struggling for a little sleep, a train of comic troubles set in; among which was 'the incessant returns of paying for the horses at every stage, with the necessity thereupon of putting your hand into your pocket, and counting from thence three livres fifteen

MR STERNE GOES A[illegible]

sous (sous by sous).' 'Then [illegible]
Curé offers you a pinch of [illegible]
soldier shows you his leg. [illegible]
box,' all substantial [illegible]
powers being thoroughly [illegible]
got on to Chantilly, where [illegible]
stables of the Prince of [illegible]
through St Denis without [illegible]
('richness of their treasure [illegible]
sense!')—took a postilion [illegible]
yellow jerkin.' At last [illegible]
evening, at nine o'clock [illegible]
pale face and clad in black [illegible]
Paris pavement clattering [illegible]
heels, and the whip of the [illegible]
tilion sounding 'crack [illegible]
and saw the 'villanously [illegible]
ting by, but dimly lighted [illegible]
saying to himself: 'So [illegible]
this is *Paris!*—humph!—[illegible]
finest, the most brilliant [illegible]
ever, are nasty.' And [illegible]
was taken, still clattering [illegible]
—through the narrow [illegible]
Quartier St Denis—[illegible]
sort of dazed wonder [illegible]
'One—two—three—four—[illegible]

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eight—nine—ten; ten cookshops! and twice the number of barbers! and all within three minutes' driving.' A savour, too, of soup and salad, salad and soup, wafted in at the window—and the people passing, as well as they can be made out in the dark by the flare of lanterns at the corner, seem all to wear swords. This was his first glimpse of Paris. Most faithful and true to nature is the description, as those who recall their first entrance into a strange foreign town will acknowledge.

The Paris of 1762, through which Mr Sterne was driven the night of his arrival, was the old Paris of the novels and the theatres; a mass of new glittering palaces and *Places*, set down in a huge wilderness of dark, narrow, winding streets, dangerous alleys, and *culs-de-sac*. Apart from the more splendid trophies of the building, pomp and luxury of the Louis', it was a tremendous gathering of dangerous 'quarters,' these 'quarters' being made up of tall, black tenements—old, crazy and tottering—grim as prisons, and each swarming with a gaunt, squalid, famished population—the whole caked and crusted together in one

corrupt mass. There were bridges across the Seine: and on those bridges were crammed together tall, tottering houses, as in the days of Old London Bridge. All through those nine hundred streets which Mr Sterne counted, and which he found so 'villanously narrow, that there is not room to turn a wheel-barrow,' was a miasma of frightful odours. He remarked, too, the dim light at nights—which made those nine hundred streets so dangerous, for they were lit with some eight thousand candles in damaged lanterns, which went out every now and again with a gust, and left all in darkness. He noted the miserable 'lean horses' which drew the *fiacres;* poor broken-down beasts from the stables of princes and seigneurs.

The social and intellectual state of refined Paris at this moment was highly curious. Just now had set in the reign of the philosophers, and that odd affectation of liberality and democracy which it became the rage to wear, even among the most exclusive circles, like one of the new fashionable head-dresses. And though the Encyclopædia had been suppressed, the Diderots and D'Alemberts, and

D'Holbachs, fortified by a crowd of intellectual queens of society, gave laws in many a *salon*. But there was a still more propitious tone to welcome Mr Sterne's arrival. A frantic Anglomania had set in, which broke out in every way that a mania could manifest itself, taking the shape of monstrous extravagances in hats, wigs, and other articles of dress; also in a preference for articles of a solid English shape and pattern; and, more abstractedly, in a passion for English works of fiction and philosophy, which were translated wholesale.

Not less welcome was he to the French, than they to him. He was a Lion to begin with, and above all an English Lion. He was at once, with scarcely an hour's delay, plunged into the crowd of the wits, philosophers, deists, actors, courtiers, and abbés. He was in the *salons* in a moment. The doors were thrown open for him. His friend Garrick, who was known to many there, had no doubt stood his sponsor here as he had in London. But in truth he found hosts of friends already on the spot. Here was Mr Fox and Mr Macartney, who afterwards went to China and became Sir

George, and Lord Macartney, and a whole crowd of 'English of distinction.' *Tristram*, not translated yet, nor to have that honour for many years to come, had travelled to Paris before him, and was prodigiously talked of, if not read. With their characteristic politeness, the new Lion was at least made to believe that his book was being devoured by eager Parisians of quality; but of all books in the world it was least likely to be intelligible to a Frenchman.

No wonder that he should write home in a tumult of rapture of the flatteries and distinctions with which he was welcomed. He had been there little more than a week when the current of dinners began to flow; and he was already bound a fortnight deep. It was the old London story over again; but there was here a new feature, not found in his London programmes—the 'little suppers.' There was the difficulty about his passports, but when such great persons as the Count de Limbourgh and Baron d'Holbach had offered the Prime Minister Choiseul 'any security for the inoffensiveness of my behaviour in France, which is more than you will do, you rogue!' it may be con-

ceived everything was soon made smooth. There seems to have been a difficulty about his passports, for, as has been mentioned, he had started before Peace had been formally arranged between the countries. And very many pleasant scenes in the 'Sentimental Journey'—the journey to Versailles to see the Minister, and the interview with the Shakspearian nobleman, who took him for Hamlet's Yorick—must be shifted back to this first visit. So, too, with his description of the little arts by which he made his way in French society—how he won over the old Marshal Biron, and Madame de G., and Madame de Vence, the young Count de Faineant; and without which he could never have been invited to M. Popelinière the great Farmer-General's concerts.* The Count de Bissie begged that he might be introduced to him, and when Mr Sterne paid him his complimentary visit, he discovered him actively reading *Tristram*. 'An odd incident,' Mr Sterne calls it, and no

* He merely passed through Paris when on the 'Sentimental Journey,' and by that time was perfectly at home there. He had not time, therefore, to be 'making his way' in society, as he describes. A later letter, too, shows that it was at this season that he was attending the Farmer-General's concerts.

doubt flattering, but to a later posterity eminently French. This nobleman showed him many civilities, and even allowed him a sort of private admission through his own apartments, to see the Orleans Gallery. But by the Baron d'Holbach he was treated with special honours as Garrick's friend, as well as for his own merits. His establishment was supported splendidly, his house was thrown open three days in the week, and was filled with all 'the wits and the scavans who are no wits.'

To Garrick he wrote with boyish rapture of all these honours. He was charmed with everything. His health was marvellously restored for the short time, though he was 'somewhat worse in the intellectuals, for my head is turned round with what I see, and the unexpected honours I have met with here. He writes a whole catalogue of all his doings. He has been to the doctors of the Sorbonne. He was just starting with Mr Fox for Versailles. He had been the night before with Mr Fox to see Clairon at the Opéra Comique, in *Iphigénie*, one of her grand parts; and it was natural that one of his theatrical taste should be enchanted with

her magnificent acting. So delighted was he, that he with 'fifteen or sixteen English of distinction' joined together in taking a couple of boxes, which gave them the right of selecting a special piece for the night. They chose his *cheval de bataille*, 'The Frenchman in London,' in which he was to 'send us all home to supper, *happy*.' 'Ah, Preville,' said Mr Sterne, 'thou art Mercury himself.' So admirable was he in turns and changes of gesture and actions 'Mercury' would seem to have been a happy personification of his peculiar style. He must have known and met Preville often. Later, when Foote and Sterne were in Paris, the great English actor used to have the great French actor to supper at his hotel, and the Frenchman would give imitations of his brethren, to the great delight of a young fencer, who was also invited.* The French actor, too, gave suppers to Garrick and Clairon, and other notorieties.†

Mr Sterne says he could write his friend 'six volumes of what has passed comically in this great scene these fourteen days,' and we can accept his statement. We could

* See Angelo's 'Letters.' † Garrick's 'Letters.'